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# KIT: A MEMORY

BY

JAMES PAYN

AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGBERD' 'BY PROXY' 'HIGH SPIRITS'  
'UNDER ONE ROOF' 'A GRAPE FROM A THORN' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

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# KIT: A MEMORY.

## CHAPTER I.

### BENEATH THE CASTLE WALLS.

BETWEEN the River Trenna and the sea lies (not stands) Trenarvon Castle, built by the Cornish Constantine (as the last King of Britain of that line was called) more than fifteen hundred years ago.

Many a vanished year and age  
And tempest's breath and battle's rage

have tried its strength in vain ; and, though  
compelled to yield, in that unequal combat  
in which stone walls no less than man must

at last succumb, it still in a manner keeps the field. The ancient keep is but 'a heap of fragments of an earlier world;' the later draw-bridge has disappeared; the very fosse has lost its depth and shape, and become a wilderness of wood and wildflower; but the stubborn pile possesses still some of its ancient features, which to the antiquarian eye at least are recognisable. It was a fortress yet, and, garrisoned by an undisciplined but loyal band, held out with pike and culverin for the King in the Civil War, wherein it lost all but honour. It was levelled (with much more) by the Puritans, since which no banner has waved from its rocky steep, no watchword echoed from its ruined walls.

But, though its greatness has departed, its beauty remains. Unlike its once proud masters, decay, though it has destroyed, has not corrupted it; nay, has enhanced its majesty, if not

its beauty. The few grey hairs that palsy stirs upon the head of age, and which in man we pitifully call his 'glory,' the trembling limbs that hardly serve to bear him to the wished-for grave, have here no parallel. The lichen and grey moss efface the ravages that time has wrought upon the crumbling pile; the ivy binds its broken ruins together, and hides its scars, or crowns them with eternal green; and in every cleft and crevice through the summer long, the wild rose and the wall-flower swing their incense over this shrine of Time, and fill the air with sweetness.

It is summer now, and there is scarce a breath of wind to bend the bluebells, or sway the feathery ferns that nestle in the undergrowth that clothes Penarvon hill. There is not a sound save the plaintive cry of the seagull, as it slides through the cloudless blue, and the

low mysterious speech of ocean, heard by the Cornish Constantine, but untranslated still.

Amid such scenes, and in such silence, man himself is wont to speak but little, and in a low key ; Nature, with her finger on her lip, impresses him with a certain awe of her ; at all events the three young men whom I see in my mind's eye to-day, reclining on the Castle slopes, converse only in hushed tones, and at intervals. The eldest of them to look at (though he is not really so) is Christopher Garston, commonly called Kit 'for love and euphony' ; a tall and well-made young fellow of some two-and-twenty, with bright black eyes, and a smile so pleasant that few men, and no woman, could, one would think, easily withstand it, though a physiognomist might pronounce it 'too eager.'

The otherwise great intelligence of his

expression is curiously interfered with by a certain look of pleasurable expectation (like that of a popular actor who is awaiting 'bravos'), and if a phrenologist should examine his head he would probably pronounce the 'love of approbation' to be too strongly marked; but this by no means interferes with his good looks. He is smoking a cigar, but even the soothing influence of tobacco has no power to still the restlessness that is habitual to him. His eyes rove over land and sea, or fix themselves on his two companions for a minute or two, and then away again, and his thoughts are wandering further still.

In this respect he is a great contrast to Frank Meade, his senior by a year or two, who lies prone beside him with his eyes fixed on the sky. His frame is gigantic, he seems born for force and action; but not a muscle of him stirs.

The smoke ascends from his huge meerschaum, so that there must needs be breath in him, but otherwise he lies with his eyes closed, and quite motionless, like a dead Hercules. His wide-awake has fallen off, and the sun plays on his bronzed face (which is, however, by no means so dark as Kit's), showing certain deep lines on his forehead very unusual in a face so young and comely. His nature is far from morose, but when he reflects he frowns, and he is much given to reflection.

The third of this little company (and the hinge on which it turns) has little in common with them as to appearance. Although junior by a year or so to the youngest of his two friends, and of that blonde and delicate complexion which is youth's own wear, Mark Medway looks an older man than either of them. His height is less, and he is more

slightly built, so that this look of comparative maturity dwells in his face alone, which is singularly grave and quiet; his blue eyes are half shut, not from indolence, but because he is near-sighted, and he is reading a book of ancient date and indifferent type.

It is said that an excellent test of friendship is the non-necessity for making conversation; that when Tom and Bob sit over the fire without a word, and neither feels called upon to speak, they are as Damon and Pythias; on the other hand, the case is not unknown where this divine dumbness arises from neither party having anything to say. In the present instance, however, the proverb holds good; the three young men are quite at home in each other's society, though Frank and Kit, perhaps, are rather Damons to Mark's Pythias, than Damon and Pythias to one another.

Presently, Mark, who is leaning against a mossy stone, drops his book upon his knee, and bringing his spectacles down from his forehead into their proper place, looks round about him, and with a sigh half tender and half comical, remarks ‘Poor Faust, poor Faust!’

‘What is the matter with *him*?’ murmurs the giant.

“My trusty and well-beloved friend,” quotes Medway (who has a marvellous memory), “the cause why I have invited you to this place is this; forasmuch as you have known me these many years what manner of life I have lived; practising all manner of conjuration——”

•‘I say,’ exclaims Meade, opening his large grey eyes to the uttermost, ‘we are not going to stand this, Kit. Why, this is Mark’s own autobiography, which he is inflicting upon us under pretence of improving our minds; for what is

all his old-world knowledge, his antiquarianism, his archæology, but a sort of black art ? ’

‘ But the book says “ conjuration,” ’ puts in Kit with gravity, ‘ and Heaven knows our dear Mark is no conjuror. ’

‘ When you have exhausted yourselves in base comparisons,’ replies the object of these gibes (who has his Shakespeare, among the ‘ old world ’ authors, at his fingers’ ends), ‘ I will read you some more of it. It will be better for Kit (Kit is a budding lawyer) than weaving cobwebs for innocent flies, and for Frank (Frank assists his father, the doctor, and is training for the paternal profession) than reminiscences from which conscience never permits him to escape, of the victims of vivisection. ’

‘ What a flow of words ! How fearfully eloquent he is ! ’ exclaims Meade, with affected admiration.

‘The very observation,’ observed Kit, ‘which was made with respect to Quilp—by Brass—when conversing about my namesake. Really, Mark, I wouldn’t stand it.’

‘I don’t care two pins for either of you,’ returns the student, beaming through his spectacles at both with affectionate good nature ; ‘I am only thinking of poor Faust. “Now to the end (he says to his sorrowing students) that I might bring my purpose to pass to have the Devil’s aid and furtherance, which I have yet wanted in my actions, I have promised unto him at the end and accomplishment of twenty-four years both body and soul, to do therewith his pleasure. This dismal day these twenty-four years are fully expired ; and out of all doubt this night he will fetch me to whom I have given myself in recompense for his service, body and soul, by writing in my proper blood. So,

well-beloved friends and brethren, before that fatal hour I take my farewell, beseeching you, if ever I have trespassed against your mind in anything, that you will heartily forgive me. And let this my lamentable end——”’

‘Stop, stop,’ cried Christopher Garston, rising to his feet and pacing the green sward in nervous irritation; ‘I can’t stand that.’

The supine giant opened his mouth in wonder, while his pipe dropped out of it unnoticed upon the grass. Mark settled his spectacles upon his nose, and gazed upon his excited friend in mild surprise.

‘I am sorry to make such a fool of myself,’ observed Kit presently; ‘but my nervous centres, as Meade would say, are disorganised—in plain English, I am all to pieces. The history of Dr. Faustus is one of your best, as I know it is one of your newest, books, my dear

Mark ; but you are not selecting the most cheerful passages from it. Read us about his familiar spirits, whose appearance is so charmingly described, though they afterwards become, poor fellows, so much more familiar than welcome.'

'Very good,' returned Medway, reopening the volume, and (as only your student can) at once finding the proper place. "'First entered Belial in the form of a bear, with curled black hair to the ground ; his ears standing upright ; within they were as red as blood, and out of them hissed flames of fire ; his teeth were at least a foot long and as white as snow, with a tail three ells long, having two wings, one behind each arm.'"

'There's word-painting for you,' shouted Kit, excitedly. 'Beautiful!'

"Lucifer himself," resumed the reader,

“sat in the manner of a man, all hairy, but of brown colour like a squirrel, and his tail turning upwards on his back as the squirrel’s used.” I think he could crack nuts, too, like a squirrel.’

‘There’s no doubt of it,’ exclaimed Garston admiringly. ‘A most accomplished creature. Pray go on.’

“After him came Beelzebub, in curled hair of a horse-flesh colour; his head like the head of a bull, with a mighty pair of horns; two long ears down to the ground——”

‘A pretty touch,’ interrupted Kit; ‘the rabbit!’

‘Hush, hush; let me complete the portrait,’ remonstrated Mark. “Out of his wings issued flames of fire, and his tail was like a cow’s.”

‘If all that was on his passport one would know him almost anywhere,’ mused Kit; while the huge Meade shook with inward laughter.

Mark held up his hands for silence and attention.

“Then came Astaroth, in the form of a worm, going upright on his tail, and had no feet, but a tail like a glowworm; under his chaps grew two short hands——”

‘That’s a stroke of genius,’ interposed Kit; ‘but it annoys our friend here as being a practical anatomist.’

‘I really can’t stand it,’ cried Meade, spluttering with laughter. ‘It is the unction with which Mark reads that destroys me. One would think that it was his own composition.’

‘I wish it was,’ observed the student with simplicity. ‘What modern writer could compass such variety in personal description! Think of Cannogasta, “white and grey mixed, exceedingly curled and hairy;” or Anobis,

with one foot under his throat and the other at his tail ; “pleasant beast,” as the old chronicler calls him——’

‘Enough, enough,’ roared the giant, waking the echoes with inextinguishable mirth, while Kit laughed with him fitfully, more, as it seemed, at the other’s enjoyment than from any tendency to laughter on his own account ; a circumstance not without significance to one who knew them, for Meade was a man not easily moved to mirth, while Garston’s high spirits were proverbial.

Mark Medway watched them both without the relaxation of a muscle. ‘You seem to me,’ he plaintively remarked, ‘to miss the beauties of our author altogether, and only to note what appears to you ridiculous. The whole narrative, when viewed in the proper spirit, is most sorrowful and pathetic. The reflection con-

cerning how Faust "forgot his soul, and also thought—the word *also* is to my mind admirable—that the Devil is not so black as he is painted, nor Hades so hot as people say," might have been written yesterday; and then his lamentable end! But if you don't like it, my dear Kit, why then, of course, we will have no more of it.'

'Well, to say truth, I *don't*,' said Garston frankly; 'and since we are quite alone, and I know the thing will go no further, I will tell you why. The fact is, my friends, the story of Dr. Faust is a little too personal.'

'Personal!' gasped Medway.

Meade said nothing, but, raising himself on his arm, regarded the speaker with surprise not unmingled with suspicion.

'Yes, I know Meade won't believe it,' continued Kit with peevish gravity. 'He thinks I

am no better than a *farceur*, I know ; but it is nevertheless true that when I was a boy of fourteen—full of imagination and very reckless—I took a leaf out of the Doctor's book, and sold myself to the Devil.'

## CHAPTER II.

## A CONFIDENCE.

THE effect produced by Christopher Garston's startling confession upon his companions was as considerable as any *raconteur* has a right to expect from a familiar audience; yet its nature in the two cases was very different. Medway let his book fall, and regarded the speaker with a look of tender concern which, under the circumstances, would have been ridiculous but for the affection that manifestly evoked it. Meade, on the other hand, wore an expression that was grave to austerity; it was not that he was shocked at Garston's statement, but that he did not believe it, and, while averse

to falsehood in material affairs, he had the very strongest objection to be humbugged in those in which he felt a far nearer and graver interest, namely, matters of physiological inquiry. 'I give you my word of honour,' said Garston, solemnly, who read the other's incredulity in his face as plainly as though 'That is false!' had been written there, 'that I am telling you the simple truth. It was that very book yonder, which I had taken to school from the library at the Knoll, that put it into my head, no doubt. At page sixteen you will find the directions for use, in case you wish to make the same bargain with the gentleman whom Faust rather uncivilly (considering that at that time he knew nothing about him) calls "the hellish prince of Orient."'

'You were not, however, personally introduced to *him*?' observed Meade, drily.

‘Well, no,’ admitted Kit, ‘though really I sometimes used to think that he had assumed the appearance of the usher. You recollect Brabazon, Medway?’

Mark signified by a gesture of disgust that he remembered him only too well.

‘Does he not remind you of the description of Brachus (omitted from your late catalogue of familiars) “with very short legs like a hedgehog, the upper side of his body yellow (think of his waistcoats!) and the lower (think of his trousers!) of various hues?”’

‘But you didn’t make the agreement you speak of, my dear Garston, with Brabazon, did you?’ inquired Meade; “you wander from the point,” as the cook said to the eel when she was skinning him alive.’

For an instant Garston’s pleasant face looked anything but attractive; his bright black eyes

flashed fire, and his thin lips quivered with rage. The metaphor of the eel had a personal application to him which he who uttered it had been far from intending. Though a very clever fellow in many ways, Christopher had weaknesses; and one of them was the desire of display. He was by nature diplomatic, and even calculating; by no means a man given to neglect his own interests in any way; but he could seldom resist the temptation of producing a sensation. His late extraordinary avowal (a perfectly truthful one) had been wrung from him in a moment of nervous excitement, but the instant it had passed his lips he regretted it. The only thing to be done (as it immediately occurred to him) was to treat it with levity, and an indifference which certainly was not wholly genuine.

‘No. I made no agreement with Brabazon,’

he returned with a careless smile; 'he was a man (as Medway will tell you) of whom the phrase "his word was as good as his bond" could have been applied in anything but a complimentary sense; they were both utterly worthless. I drew the deed myself upon the lines indicated by the worthy Doctor, only being very young, and time looking like eternity to me (as indeed it must have done to Faustus himself), I made the lease a short one. "At the end of ten years next ensuing, provided I enjoy them as I wish, and hereupon being in perfect memory, &c., &c.," and after due invocation of all the "infernal, middle, and supreme powers," I signed it, trusting to the Prince of Orient to perform his own part of the transaction at his leisure.'

'But you ought to have signed it in red ink,' suggested Meade; 'otherwise it was null and void.'

‘And a good thing, too,’ put in Mark, speaking for the first time; ‘to my mind the whole proceeding, however ridiculous, sounds very uncanny.’

‘I pricked my finger and signed it with my blood, according to precedent,’ observed Garston calmly.

‘By Jove! that was thorough, at all events,’ remarked Meade with rising interest. ‘The whole affair, though of course but a boyish fancy, is really curious. It was not done, as I gather, for a mere lark, or out of audacity.’

‘No, it was not,’ said Garston, looking straight before him as a man does who is thinking of the past; and also perhaps because he did not wish to meet his companions’ eyes.

‘Do you remember your motive at the time?’

‘I remember I had one.’

There was a pause, during which the distant wave sighed twice or thrice.

‘And the precious document?’ inquired Meade; ‘did you destroy it, or is it in one of those tin boxes at Mogadion along with all the other deeds and assignments?’

‘I destroyed it.’

‘I am glad you did,’ ejaculated Medway in a tone of great relief.

‘Well, yes,’ admitted Christopher, smiling; ‘it would not be a pleasant thing for one’s executor to light upon after one’s death. Gad! how it would astonish some people—old Penryn, for example.’

‘The good Rector would be startled, no doubt,’ said Medway, once more giving way to mirth; ‘but after a while he would begin to philosophise about it. “Now here was a young lawyer,” he would say (meaning you,

Kit), "who devoted himself from his very boyhood to his profession." By-the-bye, Garston, considering you have plenty of prudence, it seems to me that ten years was but a short tether to give yourself. Why, at twenty-four all would be over with you.'

'Just so. I admit my folly. Still my fault was a professional one: I was a victim to precedent.'

'What strange things come into boys' minds,' mused Meade, proceeding to light his neglected pipe.

While thus engaged there flashed over his head a glance of keen significance between Kit and Mark. 'That theory of the boy being father to the man,' continued Meade philosophically, 'seems to me quite untenable. They are a race altogether *sui generis*.'

'Let us hope so,' exclaimed Kit, fervently.

‘Just so; it would be really frightful if the natures of some boys I have known should have developed as they promised to do. At the period of adolescence, or thereabouts, I believe, a change for the better takes place in them. That devilish desire for inflicting pain, for pain’s sake, for example, seems to disappear. Otherwise half one’s schoolfellows, like Tom Hood’s “Blythe Carew,” would certainly be hung. Indeed, with such propensities as many exhibit, it is strange how very few ever come to utter grief or public shame.’

‘It would pain me very much,’ observed Medway, ‘if anything of that kind should ever happen to one of old Ludlow’s boys.’

‘Then let us hope it won’t,’ said Meade, good-naturedly; ‘though for my part, I don’t hold myself in any way responsible for some of *my* young friends at Christ’s Hospital.’

‘Ah, we were country bred, and by comparison innocent,’ observed Kit. ‘Mark yonder, for example, was pretty much the same at school as he is now, a bookworm at twelve, and in spectacles. Indeed, properly speaking, Mark never was a boy.’

‘I should never have been a man had it not been for you, Kit,’ said Medway, gently.

This remark had reference to a certain occasion years ago in which Garston had saved Medway’s life.

Kit laughed—it was his answer to most appeals of a serious kind—and threw a stone at a passing gull. Meade frowned without knowing it; he was rather jealous, though he never admitted it, even to himself, of Mark’s affection for Kit.

‘I think the ladies will be expecting us,’ he said, and rose to his feet with something like a

yawn. 'The tide is falling fast, and if we are going down the river we ought to start.'

'The arrangement was to depend on how long my mother's visitors chose to stay,' observed Medway. 'If the siege was raised Maud promised to hoist the flag.'

'Then I'll go up to the castle and make a reconnaissance,' said Meade. He moved away, towering above the brushwood, was lost in the tangled fosse, and presently reappeared in the distance, springing from stone to stone up the mossy steep.

'What a strange tale you have been telling us, Kit,' said Medway, in a low voice.

'It was true.'

'No doubt. My wonder is that you never spoke of it before—that is, to me.'

'Well, you must allow I keep very few secrets from you, old fellow,' returned the other

gently. 'The fact is, I thought it would shock you.'

'Then why have you told it now?'

'Ah, ask that fool of a gull yonder—there, I've missed him again, by jingo—why, he came twice within stoneshot. I don't know. An uncontrollable impulse, as the young gentleman pleaded the other day who cut his grandmother's throat; in my case it is only my own throat that suffers.'

'Nay, it's not so bad as that; but I think it was an indiscretion to tell the story before Frank. He is the best fellow in the world—almost—but he doesn't know you so well as I do.'

'If one is always to hold one's tongue for fear of being misunderstood by some commonplace person or other, one might just as well become a Trappist, and confine oneself to nodding and winking.'

‘My dear Kit,’ returned Mark, gravely, ‘you know as well as I do that Frank is anything but a commonplace person—I wish I had half his wits, not to mention his goodness. That man’s life, you will see, will be devoted to the service of his fellow-creatures.’

‘Let us hope it won’t be sacrificed to them—early,’ returned the other demurely, and in a sanctimonious tone.

‘Don’t, Kit. I could almost say I don’t like you when you talk like that.’

‘If you did you wouldn’t mean it,’ was the quiet rejoinder.

‘That’s true. I have no friend like you, Kit. When you are away at college I feel as if half myself were missing. However, there will be only one more year of it, and then you will be settled at Mogadion quite close to us all.’

Kit laughed, but not so lightly as was his wont.

‘If you could have your way, Mark, we should all live together all our lives, with no greater distance between us than lies between the Knoll and Mogadion, and after death be buried in the same churchyard.’

‘And why not?’

‘Why not? My dear Mark, how can you ask such a question? Leaving myself out of the question, do you think it probable that a man like Frank Meade will be content to vegetate in an old country town, which the very sea is leaving as though in contempt for its apathy and dulness?’

‘Perhaps not; I don’t like to think of Frank’s leaving us, but I understand that such a misfortune is possible. But in your case, with a sister as well as a father to keep you at home, you surely do not contemplate deserting us?’

‘ My sister is dear to me—very dear—as you know, Mark, though she has not a stronger hold on me than you have,’ returned Kit, thoughtfully, with eyes fixed on the sea. ‘ And yet sometimes I feel an instinct, almost impossible to resist, to leave this Sleepy Hollow and plunge into the battle of life, like the boy in the poem who sees the lights of London in the distance, and whose

Spirit throbs within him, longs to be before him then,  
Underneath the light he looks at, in amongst the throngs of  
men.

No, Mark ; our roads in life, believe me, cannot run long together, side by side, as now.’

‘ They will never be cross-roads, at all events,’ said Medway, tenderly.

‘ Cross-roads ? ’ repeated the other, with energy. ‘ Heaven forbid ! Why, you and I have known each other all our lives, and I cannot

call to mind a single quarrel. The tide of friendship has been always on the flow with us, yet without a ripple.'

'Always,' echoed Mark, with emotion ; 'always. It is because you are so dear to me, Kit, that I would have others hold you dear. The regard of a man like Meade is worth your winning, and yet so far from taking any pains to do so——'

'My dear Mark,' interrupted Kit, with a quick flush. 'You are an excellent authority on everything that occurred before the Christian era, but on everyday matters you are fallible. The famous lines in connection with Dr. Fell are too modern, I fear, to be familiar with you ; but they give the reason, or rather the no reason of affinity and antagonism to a nicety. The lady who kissed her cow is the very type and personification of friendship, which goes by

favour—"natural selection" only. That is why, Mark'—and here he turned his smiling face to his companion—'you have such a regard for *me*. I am not such a born fool as to suppose it is the reward of merit.'

It was curious to see how Mark's pained and troubled look gave way and disappeared before the other's smile, like clouds in sunshine. 'I wish, nevertheless, Kit,' he said, with mild persistence, 'that you had not told that Faust story of yours before Meade.'

'And so do I—there, I admit it. It is only with you that I should have no reserves.'

'Still, Meade is a man of honour, Kit,' observed Mark, reprovingly.

'Doubtless ; but he is not my friend as you are, nor ever will be. By-the-bye, when I was so unfortunately frank just now, did not my confession remind you of an old compact made

between two other high contracting powers—indeed, I saw it did.’

‘Yes. That also was an act of boyish folly ; and audacious, though I hope it had nothing of profanity.’

‘The agreement stands, Mark, nevertheless,’ said Garston, with a strange smile ; ‘I hold you to your promise.’

‘As you please, dear friend,’ answered the other gravely ; ‘but the performance may be beyond your powers and mine.’

‘It may and it may not.’

A solemn silence fell on both of them, till from the summit of the hill there came a cheerful shout of ‘Mark ! Mark !’ like the warning cry from sportsmen in September. They looked up and saw Meade beckoning with his huge arms.

‘What a size the fellow is,’ muttered

Garston. ‘He looks like the Spectre of the Brocken.’

‘The flag is flying from the fortress, Mark,’ .  
continued the cheerful voice; ‘the Castle is relieved, and the garrison are waiting for us.’

## CHAPTER III.

## THE KNOLL.

THOUGH Meade had spoken of the Knoll as a castle, it had been only in a metaphorical sense. It was as unlike a castle as anything could be, nor indeed would it have been easy to find its counterpart in any English dwelling-house. In some respects it resembled an Indian bungalow, being long and low, and having a verandah running round it. It was, however, by no means only a summer residence, being so sheltered and shut in on north and east by noble trees that it never felt the teeth of even those mild winters that visit Cornwall. A fall of snow was unknown at Trenarvon, though in

seasons of exceptional severity it was sprinkled here and there like an iced April shower, and used to remind Maud Medway, as a child, of her birthday cake. Maud is no child now, but a very beautiful young woman; tall and graceful, with such a magnificent harvest of golden brown hair that old Mr. Penryn, the Rector of Mogadion, and the greatest scholar in those parts, calls her 'Ceres'; on state occasions, when it is arranged in coils like crowns, he has another name for her, 'the Saxon Princess.' He is free to call her what he will, for she looks upon him as a second father. Her complexion is fair as a star, her blue eyes are intelligent as well as tender; she has the beauty without the apathy of the blonde. At the same time it must be confessed that she has not the liveliness, nor indeed the wit, of her friend and present companion, Trenna Garston. The two

girls are a great contrast to one another in appearance. Trenna's complexion, like that of her brother, is an olive brown, while her hair and eyes are even of a darker hue than his. But her face, though full of intelligence, has not the same mobility of expression. It is attractive—indeed it is exceedingly striking—but ‘graver than should be for one so young;’ the smile that irradiates Kit's countenance so often is with her a much rarer visitor, though when it comes it takes the hearts of men by storm. She was christened Trenna from a fancy of her mother's, who did not long survive her birth, after the river that flows past Trenarvon into Mogadion harbour, and in some respects she resembles it. It does not reflect much sunlight; the shadows of rocks and trees fall upon it for miles; its course is swift, and occasionally somewhat reckless. Here and

there it is as deep as ocean. But how lovingly it winds and clings to its own banks, and how faithfully, though Trenarvon moor be alive with streams, and every runlet is a river, does it keep within its proper channel!

The third person of the little company, to whose men-folks we have already been introduced, and who are now upon their way to join them, is its mistress, Maud's mother. In her you see what Maud will grow to, and how she will look a quarter of a century hence. She will by no means have lost her good looks by that time; but they will not of course be those of youth. Mrs. Medway is calm and stately, almost to majesty; but without a touch of haughtiness. Her eyes are too gentle and tender, her whole expression too benignant, to harbour aught of disdain or pride. But beneath her placid smile there can be read,

by those who have the eyes for it, a deep-rooted sorrow, which I trust her daughter's face may never know.

The three ladies are seated in the verandah looking out upon the lawn, or rather on the view beyond it. It is one that never palls upon the eye, or fails to charm it. If the Knoll were near to Plymouth, or even Falmouth, it would undoubtedly become a show place. It would have been impossible to keep the tourist, and especially the landscape-painter, who had heard of its surpassing beauty, out ; but, as it was, few strangers came to Mogadion—an ancient but small and decaying seaport ; and this Paradise was comparatively unknown. The trail of that endless serpent, the Excursionist, would otherwise have been over it all.

The place combined a certain look of fairy-land with the loneliness of 'the forest primeval.'

Only it was a tropical forest; the trees were of brilliant hues, and of a kind rarely seen in England: they made a vista that seemed to reach for miles; far beneath, the landscape was broken up into three distances, in which slept three small lakes, or rather seemed to sleep; for in reality they were in rapid motion, being, in fact, three reaches of the winding Trenna. Beyond the last you could see, with a good glass, another sort of forest than that which surrounded you—the masts of shipping which marked the harbour of Mogadion. The lawn in front of the house ran down so steeply that only a small flower-bed or two could find place in it. In the rainy season—and there was a good deal of rain at Trenarvon—they were periodically washed away, and had to be built up by Giles the gardener (hence dubbed by the family, ‘Sisyphus’); but such as they

were, they were ablaze with blossom, and made a foreground admirably in contrast with the slumbrous scene beyond them.

The garden proper lay to the left, and amply atoned for its small dimensions by the rarity as well as the luxuriance of its contents. The extreme mildness of the climate, combined with the sheltered character of the place, admitted of the cultivation of plants that are seen elsewhere only in hot-houses: the camellia, for example, was as common as the rose-tree, and wore a score of blossoms for the other's one. Nor should we omit to say that, out of the small space at the owner's command, a piece of ground had been levelled for lawn tennis, with a due array of network to the south and west, since if a ball should have gone astray that way it would have rolled on, like the echoes of the poet, 'for ever and for ever.'

It was of this popular game the ladies were discoursing at the moment of our introduction to them.

‘For my part I should like tennis even better than a row on the river,’ observed Maud; ‘but then it is so bad for Mark.’

‘You mean that not playing tennis is so bad for Mark,’ said Trenna with a sly smile.

‘Well, yes; I do. It is difficult to make him take any exercise, and exercise is so necessary to him. As for his taking a racket, he would as soon take the hand of some strange young lady—I can’t say anything stronger than that for him in the way of antipathy—and nothing pleases him better than to see us deep in the game, which gives him an excuse for burying himself in his books. Now if we put him in the big boat, he can hardly sit in the stern with mamma and see you row, Trenna.’

‘But I have not the least objection to take an ear, if Mark is lazy,’ observed the young lady thus alluded to.

‘I know that, my dear ; you are a first-rate oarswoman, and are only too well aware of the fact. Rowing, I have observed, is your only vanity ; I suppose it’s the feather.’

‘You should not say Mark is lazy, dear Trenna,’ put in that gentleman’s mother in a tone of gentle reproof ; ‘I only wish he was a little less diligent.’

‘Oh, I did not mean lazy in that sense, my dear Mrs. Medway,’ said Trenna with great gravity ; ‘I only put it in a hypothetical way, remember, but I should have said indolent.’

‘My poor Mark is not indolent,’ sighed Mrs. Medway, with a shake of her stately head.

The two girls interchanged a furtive smile. Mark’s delicacy and ailments were the most

favourite topic of his mother's save one—his perfections. 'Mr. Penryn tells me,' she continued, 'that his learning for his time of life is something marvellous. Greek and Latin he mastered with the consummate ease with which a hunter takes a fence in his stride—what are you laughing at, Maud?'

'Only at the metaphor, dear mother. At Mark, of all men, being compared to a hunter.'

'The expression was Mr. Penryn's, my dear, not mine,' continued Mrs. Medway, reprovingly. 'He said Greek and Latin were mere child's play to your brother, while of archæology and antiquities, which are his favourite studies, he already knows more than any man in Cornwall.'

'Except the Rector himself,' observed Trenna, with a certain dryness, which to a more observant ear might have suggested that the Rector was no favourite with her.

‘Well, of course, except Mr. Penryn,’ returned Mrs. Medway. ‘He has had forty years’ start of Mark, remember.’

‘Of course he has,’ interposed Maud, smiling. ‘Trenna knows that very well. Don’t you see she is only teasing you, my dear mother?’

At this Trenna burst out laughing, if a sound as low and musical as the joy-note of a bird could be called laughter, and rose and kissed her hostess.

‘You are a very naughty girl,’ said the elder lady, returning her embrace affectionately nevertheless, ‘but I do assure you dear Mark’s case is no laughing matter. I am told, though not by him, and it is a dead secret, that Mark is writing a book; think, my dear, of any one writing a book at one-and-twenty.’

‘What is it about, my dear Mrs. Medway?’

inquired Trenna. 'Not on field sports—not a "Handbook on Tennis"?'

'Handbook of fiddlesticks,' returned the elder lady, with indignation. 'Do you suppose Mark would stoop to anything so puerile? It is to be'—here she sunk her voice—'a County History, in quarto.'

'Come, that's charming,' exclaimed Trenna, clapping her little hands; 'I never know what to buy upon a journey. What a nice book it will be to read upon the railway!'

'It will be a nice book to read *anywhere*,' pursued her hostess, unconscious of the satire. 'I have no doubt of that: but think of the labour and study involved in such an undertaking! With most people, Mr. Penryn says, it would take a lifetime.'

'Oh, Mr. Penryn himself was your informant, was he, mamma?' cried Maud.

‘I didn’t mean to let it out, my dears,’ said Mrs. Medway, naïvely, ‘but it must go no further; it has been a dead secret all along.’

‘And when did you first hear of it yourself, mamma?’

‘Mr. Penryn told me, my dear, this very morning.’

At this there was another interchange of smiles between the girls; but they were tender smiles, very different from those which are evoked by scorn. A mother’s weakness for her boy was not a subject to excite ridicule in either of them, while jealousy was to Maud an unknown passion. Besides, it was really true that Mark studied too much, and was given to indulge in dreams and phantasies, the result of old-world reading; and that Dr. Meade had recommended change—a thing for which the

unconscious subject of his advice had a greater distaste than even for physical exertion.

‘With this book on his mind,’ continued Mrs. Medway, ‘it is more than ever necessary that Mark should bestir himself; and I am so delighted that Frank and Kit enticed him up to the Castle to-day.’

‘You should rather say, mamma, that the idea of meeting the general’s daughters frightened him from home.’

‘Yes, it is extraordinary how little Mark cares for ladies’ society, unless, indeed, they are old friends,’ said Mrs. Medway, with a mechanical but thoughtful glance towards Trenna. ‘But in this case liking had more to do with it than shyness; I believe Kit could persuade him to go anywhere.’

‘My brother is so very fond of Mark,’ said Trenna, with a flush of pleasure, ‘that I do

assure you I feel sometimes downright jealous of him.'

Mrs. Medway smiled with gentle pity, as though she would have said, 'and no wonder.'

'Everybody loves Mark,' she observed simply, 'but Kit best of all. That is why I like Kit so much.'

'Well, really, mamma,' said Maud, remonstratingly, 'I do hope you like Kit a little for his own sake.'

'I do—I do, my dear ; what made you think I didn't ? And there's dear Frank, too.'

'Yes ; I am sure Mark is most fortunate in his friends,' said Maud.

'Good attracts good,' observed Mrs. Medway, didactically.

'And the greater the less,' put in Trenna, silyly.

'Just so, my dear. No one would think of

comparing—that is, I mean,’ said the elder lady, catching a glance of horror in her daughter’s face, ‘all comparisons are odious—why, dear me,’ she exclaimed delightedly, ‘there he is!’

The three young men had made their appearance simultaneously, but Mrs. Medway had only eyes for one of them ; or rather, as mathematicians do with figures in the ninth and tenth places of decimals, she had ‘neglected’ the other two, as being by comparison of no consequence.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FAMILY BARGE.

THE little party had met before at the breakfast table at the Knoll. . Trenna was a temporary visitor there, and her brother and Frank Meade had rowed up thither in a skiff from Mogadion that morning, so there were no formal 'Good-days' and 'How-d'ye-do's' to be exchanged.

'Have the general and his aides-de-camp really gone?' inquired Mark, apprehensively. 'Kit thought that the hoisting of the flag might be a mere *ruse de guerre*, and that we should find the enemy still in possession of the fortress; while Frank opined that the ladies couldn't get

on without us any longer, and had signalled "Come" in desperation.'

'What conceit!' exclaimed Trenna.

'What suspicion of duplicity!' added Maud. 'That idea of Kit's could never have occurred to any person of rectitude.'

'I am not good, I know,' whimpered Kit, pitifully. 'I am only beautiful.'

At this there was a roar of laughter, not at the speaker, but at poor Maud, who, when very young and under reproof, was reported by tradition to have made this very observation. Some foolish nurse had flattered her childish vanity, and on being taken to task for some naughtiness she had defended herself in this illogical manner.

'It is a great shame,' said Mrs. Medway, 'to call to mind Maud's little weaknesses when she has so long outgrown them.'

‘Yes,’ assented Kit, with a roguish smile, ‘when she is no longer beautiful, but accomplished.’

‘Mark,’ cried his sister, with mock vehemence, ‘why do you not defend me against this wicked man, instead of grinning at his impertinences?’

‘Kit would have his joke, my dear, even upon the scaffold,’ said Mark, with his eyes shut, as his custom was when greatly tickled.

‘We shall see,’ said Maud with significance.

‘A hit, a palpable hit!’ cried Frank, clapping his hands. ‘Maud had you there, Garston.’

‘Thank you, Frank; you were always my friend,’ said Maud, gratefully.

“Short, not Codlin,” quoted Kit. ‘Oh, I know I’m nowhere in comparison with Meade.’

The speech of course was a playful one; still there was a tinge of bitterness in it that did not escape the ear. If he expected a disclaimer from the person addressed he was disappointed, but her fair face flushed from brow to chin. Trenna, too, flashed a covert glance at Maud, as if to say, 'Why don't you speak a word of comfort to poor Kit?' and when there was no reply her brow grew dark and troubled.

'And now,' said Mark, breaking in upon the silence with pretended enthusiasm, 'where are our rackets and our tennis-balls?'

The exclamation was most opportune, and touched the spring of mirth in the whole party; for as all were well aware, Mark had no racket, and never played.

'You lazy boy,' cried Maud, indignantly, 'we are not going to play tennis at all this

afternoon, and you know it ; you gentlemen are going to row us ladies down the river.'

'But Trenna is so fond of rowing,' said Mark, pathetically, 'and the boat will be so much lighter without me.'

'You are going to *row*, Mark,' said the young lady thus alluded to, in an authoritative tone. 'Frank and you are going to row Mrs. Medway and myself in the family barge, and Kit will take Maud in the skiff.'

'My dear mother,' appealed Mark, plaintively, 'is this young lady mistress of the house, or are you? Do pray assert yourself.'

'My dear boy, I think Trenna is quite right,' returned Mrs. Medway, gravely. 'The arrangement she proposes is just as it should be.'

As a matter of fact it was the one most agreeable to all parties, though in pressing it

Trenna had only thought of one person, her brother. She was devoted to Kit's interests—nay more (let us not say worse), she was bent upon promoting the gratification of his wishes, even when it was not always to his advantage that they should be fulfilled. To her, though she was but his sister, Kit was what Mark was to his mother, the apple of her eye, and not to be thwarted or crossed by any obstacle it was in her power to remove. Some people said that Trenna spoilt her brother; but no one accused Mrs. Medway of spoiling Mark; they only said she 'indulged' him; but the treatment adopted in each case was the same. The difference lay in the subjects of it.

The descent to the river was made through the garden, and the beautiful wilderness that lay beneath it. Every one of the party had

been that way scores of times, yet its charms always evoked new admiration.

‘When I leave your house, Mrs. Medway,’ said Kit, as they were crossing the little rustic bridge above the little pool, from which the best view in the Knoll grounds was perhaps to be obtained, ‘it always seems to me like quitting Paradise.’

‘And what is the worst part of it,’ grumbled Mark, ‘to undergo the curse of labour.’

For the path led to the boathouse.

The barge, as Trenna had called the Medway’s boat—though, indeed, it was but a light pair-oar—lay moored there, beside the little skiff in which the two young men had come.

The former was got ready first ; Mrs. Medway and Trenna placed themselves on the cushioned seat, in spite of Mark’s last appeal,

‘Are you sure, my dear Trenna, you would not prefer to take an oar?’

Frank, it is needless to say, pulled stroke, and his friend bow.

‘We shall overtake you before you round the Point,’ said Kit, as he pushed them off, and proceeded with deliberate solicitude to arrange Maud’s cushions for her in the skiff.

‘Don’t you be so sure of that,’ were Frank’s parting words; ‘Mark is a tiger at rowing.’

However Meade might have exaggerated his friend’s prowess with the oar, he could scarcely have exaggerated his own. Though his weight was of course considerable, his strength and skill amply compensated for it, and indeed made but little of the whole freight.

‘I don’t want you to exert yourself, my dear fellow,’ he said to his companion (‘I won’t,’ interpolated Mark), ‘if you will only

keep time and not catch crabs, Kit shall never come near us.'

It was really a fine sight to see that handsome giant settle to his work after this exordium. He never seemed to put forth his full powers. There was hardly a trace of effort, but every time his oar blades touched the water (for each had a pair of sculls) the boat seemed to fly before them as swiftly as the swallow skims.

'I wish I could see Mark put his back in it, as Mr. Penryn calls it, as Frank does,' murmured Mrs. Medway to her companion.

On the river every whisper is heard.

'Back in it,' echoed Mark, despairingly, 'I see more of Frank's back than you do; his muscles are going like the hammers in the piano when you lift up the lid. It is most curious, but no mother *could* wish her son's back to be like that, surely. There, he's

broken down at last,' for Meade was overcome with laughter; 'pew, that's charming, now one has time to breathe.'

The tide was still with them, though almost on the turn, and, though the oars were out of water, the boat still sped on like an arrow. To see Frank's smiling face was a treat to anybody, and, since his mirth had been evoked by her son's drollery, Mrs. Medway especially enjoyed it. Trenna, too, seemed to regard it with greater pleasure than she generally allowed herself to exhibit.

'There's nothing,' says a great writer, 'which evokes the admiration of women more than the manifestation of great physical strength in one of the other sex;' nor is this far from the truth, for there 'he is rich where she is poor,' and his 'unlikeliness fits her own' with most completeness. It fills her with that sense

of protection which, to the true woman, is after all one of his chiefest charms, whether she herself stand in need of it or not. Trenna Garston stood in no such need. She possessed a physical vigour very rare in one of her sex, and a spirit of independence rarer. But she did not withhold her natural tribute of admiration, and Meade, though he was far from recognising it for what it was, perceived at least that Trenna was well pleased. He had seldom seen her smile so kindly on him; had doubted, indeed, whether she ever did so smile.

The truth was, Trenna was somewhat jealous of him upon her brother's account; she resented his familiarity with the family at the Knoll as a sort of infringement of Kit's copyright of friendship with them; but at this moment when Kit was where he would be—

alone with Maud—this feeling of antagonism was in abeyance, and she could regard him with fairness.

As for Meade, he was no exception to the rule that there is no occasion when a man is not prepared to regard a pretty woman, who shows the slightest kindness for him, with favour. The situation and its surroundings—the calmness of the summer evening, the monotone of the rushing river, and the beauty of its full-foliaged banks—were all propitious to the tender passion. Frank had often admired Trena before—no anchorite could have done otherwise, and Frank was no anchorite—but never had she looked to him so beautiful; her *spirituelle* face, as it hung dreamily over the clear stream and was mirrored there, might have belonged, he fancied, to some Undine; her fair form, as it reclined upon the scarlet

cushion, was the very embodiment of grace. On ordinary occasions she spoke to him but rarely ; her attitude towards him was that of one who keeps an armed truce ; but on this occasion she conversed with him freely, and her voice was music in his ears.

Had she bared her heart he would have read some things there that would have astonished him ; but he would have found inscribed upon it both liking and respect for him ; for the first time he read the former in her face. In her words, too, there was liking. It was not what she said, but the manner in which she said it, which implied this ; though, indeed, she might have said the softest things, had she so pleased, with as little reserve as though they were alone, since, when her son was present, Mrs. Medway had neither ears nor eyes for others. It was an afternoon that

Meade would not have easily forgotten, even had there been nothing else—and it was fated there should be much—to fix it in his memory.

As the river broadened, and they emerged from its loneliness and comparative quiet into Mogadion harbour, with its crowd and stir, it seemed to the young man, though his thews and sinews had been busy throughout the voyage, that he was awakening from some rapturous dream to common life.

Their intention was to take an evening meal with Trenna's father, after which the little party, except Frank and Kit, were to return by carriage to the Knoll. As the repast, however, was to be a cold one, there was no need for punctuality, and at the landing-place stood Dr. Meade on hospitable thoughts intent.

‘My dear Mrs. Medway,’ he said, ‘I have

just seen Garston, and he will not be home for half an hour at earliest. A patient of mine who has not that confidence in my skill which you have, has sent for him all in a hurry to make his will, so I have undertaken to be your host in the meantime.'

'Now, my dear Doctor, is it true?' replied Mrs. Medway, doubtfully. 'You know you once made us lunch with you instead of Mr. Penryn, under false pretences.'

'I beg your pardon, my dear madam; I only took it for granted that the Rector would have been occupied in the performance of a certain duty, which, as it turned out, he grossly neglected. That he should have sent his curate instead of going in person to marry the mayor's daughter was so unlike a man with any regard to his own interests, that I said boldly for him, as a man should do for an absent friend whom

he respected, "Penryn is engaged elsewhere to-day."

'But then he *wasn't*, you know,' argued Mrs. Medway, 'and it made him exceedingly angry.'

'It did, I allow; but that arose from the consciousness of a duty unfulfilled. He was in reality annoyed with himself, and not with me, and it did him morally a world of good. But as to Garston, he is an attorney—begging Miss Trenna's pardon (to whom I kiss my hand), but the truth must be told at all hazards—and you may be certain I wouldn't run the risk of offending *him*. No; you must really look in upon us and take a cup of tea. After such exertions as I see your son has been taking, my dear Mrs. Medway, some immediate refreshment is essential to restore his drooping energies.'

Dr. Meade, it will be seen, was a wag ; he was also one of that class which are now only to be found in out-of-the-way country districts—a character.

Rubicund, massive, imperious, he was a man who held his own, and got his own way more than many a county magnate. The belief in his skill was universal, and so deep-seated that it doubled his professional usefulness. It had often happened when a drooping patient had said, ‘I shall die,’ that this man’s confident ‘No you won’t’ had done more to save him than his medicines ; and this masterful spirit, which he carried into all his actions, made most of them victories. The Doctor’s hand was as open as his heart, and the poor idolised him ; but his manner, so far from being of that smooth oleaginous sort affected by some very successful members of his profession, was often brusque,

and sometimes tart. This made him, with some persons, unpopular. It did not suit the fastidious taste of the Rev. Brooklyn Penryn, Rector of Mogadion, for example, and would have hindered his appreciation of the good Doctor, even if that circumstance of his having seduced his favourite guests on a certain occasion from his luncheon table had never occurred. As it was, the Rector shrank from the Doctor's society, and spoke of him confidentially as 'The Savage.'

Whether savage or not, he had the rude virtue of hospitality in perfection. Dr. Meade's small but comfortable house stood almost for 'home' in the eyes of many a country neighbour whenever he visited the little seaport. There was always simple but savoury fare to be found there at mid-day for all friends round Mogadion ; 'a knife and fork,' as the host him-

self modestly expressed it, for everybody, ‘and a hearty welcome.’ ‘The Cote,’ or ‘Dovecote,’ as it was called, from the pigeons that strutted about it, inside and out, stood a hundred feet or so back from the narrow winding roadway that formed the high street of Mogadion, and the old-fashioned garden that occupied the space between gladdened every passer-by with its sweetness and beauty.

The box-trees with which it was interspersed gave it the only formality it possessed, and though it could boast of none of the rare floral beauties that made the garden at the Knoll so attractive, in perfume and splendour it eclipsed it quite. There was no house opposite the Cote, which would have commanded an uninterrupted view of the bay but for the presence of a shipping quay, where from time to time vessels of considerable burthen would

receive or discharge cargoes. Even during those operations, however, themselves both interesting and picturesque, the outlook from the house was by no means shut out, and even acquired a certain quaintness from the masts and spars that intersected it.

At the door of the Cote stood Rachel Deeds, the Doctor's housekeeper, whose smile and curtsy, unlike the master's welcome, were by no means given to everybody : in the present case, however, the visitors were received with all the honour it was in her power to bestow. Mrs. Medway was a great favourite of hers, and Mrs. Deed's daughter, Lucy, was in service at the Knoll, as Miss Maud's own maid.

‘I know whom you are looking for, Rachel,’ smiled Mrs. Medway, ‘but Maud will be here presently ; she is coming after us in the skiff with Mr. Christopher.’

It was curious that up to the mention of that young gentleman's name old Rachel had taken no notice of Trenna, whose presence she now acknowledged, not without a certain stiffness. Yet her son Abel Deeds was Mr. Garston senior's man-servant, and the young lady in question was almost as well known to her as Miss Maud.

But the fact was Mrs. Deeds not only claimed to have her likes and dislikes, but showed them. The pleasure that lit up her face at the sight of her young master was proof enough of this, and indeed, though the old man loved his son better than all the world, himself included, he was less demonstrative of his affection for him than was his housekeeper. A nod and a cheerful 'Well, my boy!' was all that the Doctor had vouchsafed to Frank on this occasion, though they had not met before that

day; and Frank's 'How are you, sir?' in reply, might have been thought formal by those who did not know the deep affection that existed between them. It is not in words, however, that love and reverence dwell, notwithstanding that so large a majority of the human race would persuade us to the contrary.

## CHAPTER V.

## AT THE DOVECOTE.

LIKE all worthy professors of his noble calling, Dr. Meade was the repository of many secrets—some of them confided to him, but more of them guessed. He knew where many a patient's shoe pinched, and had the 'length of their feet,' while they flattered themselves that, though prescribing for this and that, the most serious of their maladies was beyond his ken. He could read the embarrassments that are the precursors of ruin in insomnia, and the domestic quarrels that end in separation in suppressed gout. Fortunately for his neighbours, with this

quick sight for human ailments, mental and bodily, he combined a fine sense of honour that caused him to keep his discoveries to himself.

The Doctor knew of Mrs. Medway this : that she had become comparatively poor through an act of self-sacrifice which, though dictated by principle and indeed by a plain sense of justice, had been a bitter humiliation to her to put into effect. Her late husband had been a London merchant of good position, but whose devotion to his family had caused him to insure his life for an amount unusual in one of his circumstances. Of late years times had not been so good with his particular business, and the paying of his premiums had made a serious inroad into his income. On his death, however, those he left behind him reaped the fruits of his prudence and self-denial. Though Mr. Medway died the possessor of a much smaller fortune

than had been expected, the insurance companies more than supplied the deficiency, and the widow and her children were left in affluence. It was more than a year after her husband's death that certain suspicions she had always entertained respecting his end were corroborated by a memorandum found by her in his own handwriting: his temperament had been nervous to excess, and from dwelling upon his commercial losses, his mind, always inclined to 'speculate for the fall,' as his City friends termed it, had given way. Under these circumstances—not in a moment of depression, but after a long duration of it, which admitted of certain cunning arrangements by which he threw all but his wife off the scent—he had committed suicide. The insurance companies had paid the policies, and, what was of much more consequence in the widow's eyes, not a breath of suspicion rested on the dead man.

To return the money would be to asperse the memory of the man she had loved, and still loved, better than all the world. But Mrs. Medway did not hesitate for a moment; she made prompt and full restitution, and turning her back upon London, which had no longer any pleasurable associations for her, settled in Cornwall with her children, both at that time of tender age.

Thither at least it was unlikely that any story with reference to their father's unhappy end would follow them. Her own lips, we may be sure, would have been ever closed respecting it, but for her anxiety on her son's account, who, as she observed, or imagined, began to develop certain traits of character which had belonged to his father. He was not, indeed, subject to depression, but his habits were too studious, and his disposition too thoughtful and sedate, for one

so young. A mother's solicitude must be her excuse for attaching to these symptoms a too grave significance. To reveal her fears was to aggravate a wound that Time had even yet hardly healed, and to sin against her reverence for the dead ; but to conceal them might be to risk the happiness of the living. In seeking Dr. Meade's advice for Mark she had been compelled to tell him all, and her confidence had not been misplaced.

She had found not only a guardian for her son, but a friend for herself. Under other circumstances he would have ridiculed her apprehensions, which, indeed, were at present at all events sufficiently groundless ; but, as it was, his respect and admiration for her took off all the sharpness of his satire. At the most he allowed himself only a little good-natured raillery, as when he had spoken of Mark's late exertions at

the oar, of the true nature of which his professional eye had of course at once informed him.

One member of the Cote household still remains to be introduced, the cat Gregorius, so called from its peculiar purr, which was supposed to resemble chanting. This animal was a magnificent Angora, about whose well-being it was whispered the Doctor was as solicitous as about that of any of his patients. Once he had lost him, though not by the common lot. Gregorius had suddenly disappeared, and neither the garden nor the chimney-corner had known him for an entire year. Placards were issued; rewards were offered; all that human skill could suggest was tried in vain to win back the wanderer. That any one in Mogadion—even the most wicked of boys—could have wilfully harmed the Doctor's cat was an idea not to be entertained; the Rector's cynical suggestion that he had been

translated to Paradise seemed quite as possible. At the end of twelve months, Gregorius was found in his usual chair in the breakfast-room one morning, chanting a little louder than was his wont, but otherwise unchanged and unmoved. In the interval, as it turned out, he had been to Buenos Ayres and back. A ship at the quay had been loading for that port, and Gregorius had gone on board—it was supposed for rats—on the day it sailed. She had been out a week, as the captain told the Doctor apologetically, and had a fair wind, or he would certainly have put back when his favourite was discovered to be a stowaway. As a matter of fact, the precious creature had never been permitted to set foot on shore at the end of his voyage; but the Doctor would declare that Gregorius was full of information respecting South America, and, like the Rector—who had had that reputation

for forty years—was meditating the publication of a book.

If Mrs. Medway had needed any claim upon her host's regard she would have found it in the cat's affection for her. No sooner had she taken her seat at the tea-table than Gregorius was on her lap, tapping her hand with his velvet paw to remind her that the clotted cream—recommended by the Doctor as equal to cod-liver oil—was within her reach, and that buttered toast can be procured for a friend, even if one does not care for it for one's own eating.

‘You know what's good,’ observed Mrs. Medway caressingly; ‘don't you, Gregory?’

‘He is indeed an excellent judge of character,’ observed the Doctor. ‘He took a fancy to you, my dear lady, from the first.’

‘ Oh ! but I didn’t mean *that*, I’m sure,’ said Mrs. Medway.

‘ My dear Frank, do you hear how your papa is going on with my mamma ? ’ inquired Mark.

‘ I’m used to it,’ answered Frank laughing ;  
‘ why, bless your heart, that’s nothing.’

‘ Yes, but if you or I were to talk like that to any young person——’

‘ It would do you a great deal of good, sir,’ exclaimed the Doctor. ‘ Even a Platonic attachment is better for a young fellow than nothing.’

‘ My dear Doctor,’ interposed Mrs. Medway, picturing to herself on the instant her darling fallen in love, and meditating flight from the maternal roof, ‘ I beg you won’t put such notions into Mark’s head.’

‘ If they don’t come of themselves, my dear

madam,' said the Doctor, drily, 'they won't come at all. They can't be dibbled in like potatoes. But they are pretty sure to come sooner or later; and upon the whole it is better to have them early, and get them over.' As he said these words the Doctor glanced uneasily from Trenna to his son, as though he recognised some signs of an attachment there, which he would have been unwilling to see grow to maturity.

Trenna's eyes met his own with an expression so cold and stately that it was almost contemptuous. Perhaps she thought that other looks beside his own were fixed upon her.

Frank, on the other hand, gave no such evidence of self-consciousness. In the boat he had certainly experienced some emotions of the lover; but the moment of attraction had

apparently passed by, or perhaps his present surroundings had recalled him to everyday life and dissolved his day-dream. He seemed, indeed, rather amused than concerned with his father's remarks ; but, on the other hand, that was how he generally received any observations from the paternal lips, with which he was unable to sympathise. The Doctor, for example, was prejudiced and somewhat obstinate in matters relating to his own profession, slow to change and averse to novelties even when they were substantial improvements. But when he pressed these views on Frank, who was of the new and more scientific school, the young man never argued with him, but smiled—anything but acquiescence. This did not arise from irreverence, far from it ; but in matters where principle was concerned he could not bring himself to yield, so ‘lightly

put the question by.' Such a course of conduct would have been dangerous with some fathers as provocative of apoplexy; but the Doctor, who lost his temper with others rather easily, was never tempted to do so with his son. His sagacity enabled him both to discover Frank's motive for declining the fray, and to perceive the independence of character, or originality of thought, which declined to win the paternal favour by submission.

Upon the present occasion, however, because he felt the silence to be a little embarrassing, Frank was about to make some humorous defence of First Love, of which his father had spoken so disparagingly, when he was interrupted by an exclamation from Mrs. Medway.

'Why, dear me,' she cried, 'there's Host Number Two. You see, Doctor, nobody trusts

you with their guests a bit longer than they are obliged to do.'

'Mr. Garston gave me the loan of you for half an hour,' said the Doctor, resolutely; 'and for five minutes more you are mine. Now, my dear sir, I do hope you have not been cutting short poor Jones's will, and putting it into plain English in order to get home to your friends; the omission of such a beautiful (and expensive) word as hereditaments, as you once explained to me, you know, may be fatal to his heirs.'

'What *do* you mean?' inquired the new comer with a puzzled air, and the least tinge of a foreign accent. In appearance he looked very foreign indeed, swart as a Spaniard (indeed he came of a Spanish stock) and squat as a Dutchman, with bright beady eyes, which, cunning rather than intelligent, and wholly destitute of spirituality, seemed like cheap

imitations of the brilliant and speaking orbs of his daughter.

‘Well, I mean,’ resumed the Doctor, peevishly, ‘that since you have got Maud and Christopher at home, you might have left these other folks a little longer with me—but there, I suppose you have not been home, but have come straight away from Jones.’

‘I have not come straight away; I have just come from home. There is no Maud and Christopher there; what is it you mean?’

‘Then, good Heavens, where *are* they?’ exclaimed Mrs. Medway, starting up and clasping her hands.

‘Where *are* they? why, on the river, of course,’ answered the Doctor, gaily, but with a swift significant glance towards his son—or rather towards the place where his son had stood, for Frank had left the room on the

instant, accompanied by Trenna, upon a quest the speaker understood at once. 'They are drifting down the river slowly,' he continued in the same cheerful tone, 'as young people will do who find themselves in the same boat together, and imagine they wish it to last for life.'

'But the tide would have brought them here without the help of oars by this time,' exclaimed Mark with a scared look. 'I will take a boat at once and see what has become of them.'

'Oh no, no!' cried his mother in a voice of agony. 'Is it not enough that Maud, my darling Maud, may have perished in that dreadful river? Let a boat be sent at once; but, for Heaven's sake, let others go, Mark, and not you.'

'My dear Mrs. Medway,' said the Doctor

soothingly, 'you are distressing yourself quite unnecessarily. Christopher swims like a fish, does he not, Garston?—and even Maud herself can swim a little.'

'Not in the river; not in such a tide as that,' cried Mrs. Medway, wringing her hands. 'Run, Mark—a boat, a boat; but promise me——'

Mark had rushed to the door ere his mother had concluded her appeal, but the Doctor's hand was on his shoulder. 'Stop where you are for your mother's sake,' he whispered. 'Look, look; there goes the boat,' he added aloud triumphantly, 'with the best oarsmen in it in all Mogadion, and the best of coxswains, albeit she is a woman.'

He pointed to the open window, through which the same boat in which the party had arrived, but with Frank at the oar,

and Trenna at the stern, could be seen shooting across the harbour like a bird. ‘Garston, my man,’ he continued cheerfully, for the other had dropped into a chair with an expression difficult to translate, but of reflection and embarrassment rather than of distress, ‘you have a daughter to be proud of.’

‘But Kit, Kit!’ observed the lawyer uneasily.

‘Kit will be all right, and Maud will be all right; if they are on the river Frank will find them, and if anything—that is, if they have had a ducking—they will be on land. Rachel, order the waggonette instantly—at once.’

‘My carriage,’ murmured Mr. Garston.

‘Nonsense! your carriage is a fine affair—and you have a fine coachman who will take a fine time to put to. Now here we are, rough but ready. There, I hear the wheels already.

We will go by the road, we four, so that we shall be sure to meet our young friends, even if the boat should miss them.'

Within such a space of time as could only have been possible in a doctor's household, used to emergencies and despatch, the wagonette and pair was at the door; and at the words, 'Quick, the Knoll!' started at a gallop with its anxious tenants.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE SEARCHERS.

MARK had been mistaken when he observed that, even if Kit and Maud had suffered their light boat to drift down the stream, it would have carried them to Mogadion by the time which had elapsed since the rest of the party had reached it. It would have doubtless done so had the tide continued to ebb, but it was almost on the turn when they had embarked; a circumstance which had not escaped the notice of Frank, though it tended but little to decrease his anxiety. However little Kit had exerted himself, it was certain that the skiff

was overdue ; and, as we have seen, Frank had not lost a moment in investigating the cause of its delay. The quickness with which Trenna had understood his look, and his movement towards the door when her father's news was told, had been marvellous ; one would have almost said that such a tacit appeal could not have been so instantly understood and acted upon unless the two had been bound together by that common sympathy which exists only in the hearts of those who love one another. Such an idea, however (even if the time had been fitting for the entertainment of it), would never have crossed Frank Meade's mind ; it was the thought of Kit's being in peril, as Frank well knew, which had so sharpened Trenna's quick wits. Her brother was all in all to her ; and though if Mark, for example, had been with his sister in Kit's place, Trenna

would have done all she could for them, the tidings that had just fallen on her ear would not have driven the blood from her cheeks, and made her large eyes wild with terror as it had done.

‘You must steer, Trenna,’ cried Frank, as they ran down the garden, ‘and I will take the oars ; we shall get on almost as fast that way, and you will be able to keep a good look out.’

She bowed her head in assent, but at the same time a shudder ran through her slight frame.

‘A good look out for *what?*’ was her dismal thought ; ‘not for the boat and its occupants, for they could hardly be passed by unnoticed, but for the boat *without* its occupants, or perhaps for a pale corpse, whose hands, no more to be clasped in hers, should

be holding in their last clutch some broken branch or river weed !’

Notwithstanding the tumult of her mind and the haste of her movements, it was noticeable how deftly she seated herself in the boat and took the rudder-lines, while Frank on his part seized the oars with a promptness altogether distinct from hurry and settled to his work on the instant. If the lives of the missing pair were in any way dependent upon human skill and intelligence, they were fortunate indeed in those to whom their succour had been entrusted. Not a word was spoken till the boat left the harbour and entered the river ; then ‘Keep the midstream,’ said Meade, ‘and watch the left bank while I watch the right.’

They thus proceeded for some minutes at great speed, keeping their eyes on the swirling

stream with its occasional freight of branch and brier.

‘What *can* have happened, Frank?’ murmured Trenna, suddenly.

It was the first time she had ever called him ‘Frank’; though his mind was full of Maud at the time he noticed the fact, and set it down to its true cause; her anxiety and alarm were such that she used the first word that came into her mind, and quite unconsciously.

‘Heaven knows, Trenna!’ he answered. ‘Some accident has probably happened to the boat; Kit may have lost an oar. I have known him do so; he is not very careful. In that case they would have had to put to shore.’

Trenna shook her head. ‘He would not have been careless in Maud’s company,’ was her significant rejoinder.

‘Her safety, if it were threatened, would

have been his only thought, no doubt,' replied the other, gently.

'Yes, that is the worst of it.'

'The worst of it!'

'Did I say that? What I meant was that at all hazards to himself he would have striven to save her. In a stream like this we know what must come of such Quixotry. Two lives are lost in place of one.'

The words were uttered with a certain impatience and indignation, that struck her companion.

'Good Heavens, Trenna! would you have had him forsake her, under any circumstances?'

'I would have had him preserve his life,' she answered fiercely; 'no woman's life is worth such a life as Kit's. Oh Kit, dear Kit!' To reason with her Frank saw was useless; he rowed on in silence till presently the girl

exclaimed with agitation, 'Gently, gently, there is something yonder.'

He turned round and beheld some object tossing and swirling in an eddy under a horn of the left bank. He drew up to it swiftly, and Trenna put her hand out and dragged it into the boat. It was a skiff's rudder.

A glance at it was sufficient for Frank, who, without a word, continued his exertions. One would have thought that he had already done all that man and oar could do, but this incident appeared to incite him to still greater speed. The boat seemed to fly out of the water rather than through it, with every stroke.

'What is the use, Frank?' exclaimed Trenna, a touch of admiration mingling with her despair; 'you are spending strength and breath in vain. If he—if they are not on land by this time they must be beyond human aid.'

‘The Tusk, the Tusk,’ he murmured, and plied his sculls as before. Then she understood on what he built his hopes.

The Tusk, so called from its sharp point, was in mid stream, not far from where they were ; in dry seasons, when the stream was low, it formed a small island, and was always visible during the ebb tide. But after rain, when the tide had begun to flow, it was submerged, and to those who were unacquainted with the navigation of the river was a most dangerous object. The weather had been wet of late, which made the chance a very slender one, but there was a possibility if the skiff had gone to pieces there (as was most likely) that its tenants might have found foothold on the Tusk itself. Escape from it, unless the swimmer was both strong and skilful, would have been impossible, for the stream on both sides was exceptionally swift and deep.

They were now rounding a corner which disclosed the reach of the river wherein this rock was situated, and Trenna was straining her aching eyes to catch sight of it in vain. She did not know, as Frank knew, the exact spot where it was situated. Suddenly he ceased rowing and uttered a deep sigh.

‘What is the matter? Are you hurt?’ she gasped; for the moment she thought that his immense exertions had ruptured a blood-vessel. He shook his head and pointed to the water behind her, through which the Tusk was plainly visible. Indeed, while she looked at it some lull of the wave bared a few inches of smooth rock beneath it, which stood up like a gray gravestone.

Then the rudder strings fell from the girl’s hold and she fainted away.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE 'TUSK.'

THE spot from which the voyagers to and from the Knoll landed and embarked, and on which the gate of its 'wilderness' opened, was by no means an ordinary landing-stage.

There was a fishermen's village, the inmates of which were on something more than 'visiting terms' with the Medway family. Maud and her mother visited them indeed, but not with tract in hand, in the patron-mission manner. The villagers and she were the best of friends, and the children idolised her. It happened, therefore, that though the family barge and its

inmates had got off with not much molestation, Maud and Kit, who were slower in their movements, became the victims of juvenile enthusiasm. Every child wanted a word or a pat on the head from Miss Maud, and she was too good-natured to refuse them. Her companion, though in general children were not much in his way (except in the obnoxious sense), secretly favoured this demonstration, since it prolonged delay. It was not often that he had the chance of a *tête-à-tête* with Maud Medway, and he greatly appreciated it.

She could not be said to shun him, but she did not seek his companionship, which on this occasion, as it will be remembered, had been imposed upon her by Trenna. She liked Kit very well and enjoyed his society; but she preferred to enjoy it with others: and the reason was, though she had never acknowledged

it even to herself, she was afraid of liking him too much. It is sad, but true, that there are people whom we like more than we respect, and better than those whom we respect; and this was the case in the present instance. She admired Kit's comeliness, his intelligence, and his geniality, but her regard for him was clouded with a doubt. In the case of words spoken against the powerful, we are informed that the birds of the air will carry the matter; but what one says and does in an English country town, whether in reference to the powerful or otherwise, are seeds caught up by every wind and carried all over the neighbourhood, to bear their crop in due or undue season. If all of us have not our enemies we have at least our detractors, and the Garston family was no exception to the rule. The head of it was unpopular even to a greater

degree than a country attorney is bound to be—at all events, to some folks. The keeping of a gig was in Thurtell's days a proof of respectability, but Mr. Garston kept a carriage and pair, and yet had not succeeded in establishing that matter beyond dispute. Nobody quite knew where his money came from, nor indeed whether he really had any. His professional practice was small, and exceedingly sharp. His appearance, as we have seen, was far from impressive; his manner towards his inferiors was harsh, and to those above him in position too conciliatory. If it had not been for the attractions of his son and daughter, Mr. Garston the elder would have had much difficulty in getting into society at all. None but very dull or pretentious folks had ever found fault with Kit's manners—when he wished to please. Indeed, it was whispered—

and, when a whisper is widespread it is as bad as anything spoken out—that in certain quarters he had been found only too irresistible; and that he had been sent to college (where he had now been two years) not so much for learning, which Mr. Garston, senior, despised, nor for tone and polish (of which the young man stood in no need), as to keep him out of mischief. There were rumours also of his extravagant habits, and of quarrels with his father in consequence of them, which it had taken all Trenna's address to heal.

Mark had heard these scandals, and had disbelieved them, as he would have disbelieved anything else said to his friend's discredit; and as Mark thought, so his mother thought. But Maud, who thought for herself, had concluded there could hardly be such volumes of smoke without a spark or two. She was not the sort

of girl to gossip with her maid, but simple Lucy Deeds, who stood in no great awe of her kind young mistress, had now and then spoken of the 'goings on' at the White House (as Mr. Garston's residence was called, where her brother Abel was in service) in a manner that was rather alarming.

All this, however, for she was a true woman (that is, a bit of a hypocrite), you would never have guessed from her manner when in Kit's company; nor, with all his cleverness, did he guess it. He thought her light indifferent way with him was natural to her, and a proof that she cared little for him. In the case of any other girl he would have felt piqued at this and even angry, but in Maud it grieved him, because he loved her. He often shot an arrow at her in hopes to hit a soft spot in her heart,

which she turned aside as it were with a wicker shield.

‘Are you going to trust me with the tiller ropes, Kit?’ she inquired as she lightly took her seat in the skiff.

‘Of course I am,’ and as the boat shot from the shore he added, in a lower tone, ‘I would trust you with anything.’

The sentiment was one which, as we have said, she could hardly have reciprocated in any case, but the expression of it, so early on the voyage, made her almost wish that it was over.

‘I am not such a good coxswain as Trenna, remember,’ she answered.

‘You have nothing to guard against except the Tusk, which is very sharp though often concealed, like the sting in a lady’s speech,’ replied Kit, who was a little annoyed by her ignoring of his pretty compliment.

'You misquote the metaphor,' she answered gaily; 'the keenness of the tooth is compared by Shakespeare to man's ingratitude.'

It was injudicious of her to venture upon the poets.

'To that sarcasm,' he answered, 'since you are for quotations, I can honestly reply, "Sweet, it hurts not." I may be worthless, Maud, but I am not ungrateful.'

'I am sure you are not, though indeed I am not aware that I have ever laid you under any obligation.'

'I am sorry for it,' he answered simply.

'Sorry for what?'

'Sorry that you do not know I am under an obligation to you.'

If he had expected she would reply 'Under what obligation?' he was mistaken. There was a tenderness in his tone which put her more on

her guard than ever. Since she could not parry him with a joke as usual, she resolved to adopt the *rôle* of sister, which their long friendship and familiarity permitted her to do.

‘Really, Kit, your modesty overwhelms me. If it comes to obligation the indebtedness is ours, not yours. But for you we should not now have Mark with us, and what would the Knoll be without Mark? If anything had happened to him I do believe I should have lost my mother also.’

‘Yes,’ he answered thoughtfully, ‘they always remind me of that line in *Circumstance*, “Two lives bound up in one in golden ease.” I cannot picture one apart from the other; while their confidence in the future as bringing no change is so touching, and ’—he added after a pause—‘so pitiful.’

‘But change is not necessarily for the worse,’

observed Maud, eager for the security of philosophic argument.

‘In their case it can hardly be for the better,’ he answered; ‘that is the one advantage in being miserable; one hopes, though one is generally a fool for hoping, that things must mend.’

‘You must know very little about misery, Kit: to judge by your high spirits you ought to be the happiest of men.’

He shook his head and dipped the oar blade lightly in the water. The tide had slackened and gave them little aid; their progress was but slow. ‘You are mistaken there, Maud; and as to being the happiest of men—good Heavens!’ He laughed bitterly, then added with gratitude, ‘Not but that there are possibilities of such a thing even for me; I might be made so.’

Maud felt her colour rising, and strove to keep it down in vain. ‘Oh, as to that,’ she said, ‘I believe that the happiness of all of us rests with ourselves.’ The platitude of her remark still further betrayed her embarrassment, and she knew it.

‘In your mother’s case, for example?’ he answered.

‘Well, mamma is an exception ; she is not so much herself as herself and Mark.’

‘Say, rather, “Mark and herself,” ’ he put in, smiling ; ‘he is the substance, she the shadow.’

‘And yet you, who saved him for her, would have me think that we are under no obligation. What a terrible fate, too, was that from which you delivered him ! Mamma has never had the courage even to speak of it.’

‘Yes ; an early death is of itself no great misfortune, perhaps, for many a man ; but the

manner of it would in his case have been exceptionally painful—at all events to think of.'

'How was it exactly?'

'You must have heard it a hundred times.'

'Never from the one person qualified to tell it.'

'Well, we were alone together, Mark and I. It was the Saturday half-holiday, and we had gone to the sand-cliff, where they find the scythe-stones. Each man has his burrow there, just as you see in the silver mines above Mogadion, but they were taking holiday like ourselves. In the sheds outside they had left their picks and shovels, which, as it turned out, was lucky. Most of the tunnels are safe enough, well propped with fir stakes; but in others the owners are too poor, or too careless, to take that precaution, or they have sold their stakes for drink, and chance it. They dig in constant

danger. It is like living in a house with a roof, but without walls. Being schoolboys it was, of course, one of the unsafe ones we chose for our explorations.'

'I always heard,' interposed Maud, 'that Mark ran in before you could stop him, and that you followed at the risk of your own life.'

'Well, I was older and knew the danger better; moreover, I saw that the tunnel in question had fallen into disuse, a sign of its being very perilous; so I ran in after him and called, "Come out, come out!" Perhaps, my voice brought down the sand, in which case Mark had nothing to thank me for, but at all events down it came.'

'How horrible! What did it feel like?'

'Like what it was; we were buried alive. Mark had turned at my cry, and was coming towards me, but of course I was nearer to the

adit. The sand was in my mouth, my ears, my nostrils ; it clung around me as though it were taking a cast of every limb ; but fortunately it was dry ; if it had been damp I should not have been here this evening in the cool summer weather talking to you, Maud.'

'No, indeed ; but I am thankful to say you are here. Well, what did you do then ?'

'With a great effort, I managed to scramble through the sand, as one plunges through a snowdrift, and found myself outside. For the moment I fancy I must have lost my senses ; for I don't remember picking up the spade. Heavens ! how I dug till I saw Mark's arm sticking out like a dead branch, and then how I pulled. It makes me hot to think of it even now.'

'On the contrary, it makes me shiver to listen to you,' cried Maud, excitedly. 'How

near you must both of you have been to death.'

'Mark was certainly near it. His face was quite white and very wet, as though he had been dipping it in the river here, and he was utterly unconscious. I took the sand out of his mouth, and did what I could to restore animation. It was not quite what Dr. Meade would have done, no doubt, but at all events it answered. After a minute or two he breathed my name, just "Kit," but it was the most welcome sound I had ever listened to.'

'No wonder Mark is so fond of you,' said Maud gently; 'if any one had saved *my* life like that I should have been theirs for ever.'

'Then how I wish it *had* been your life.'

She had been imprudent, no doubt, in affording him such an opportunity; she had

'teed' the ball for him, as a golf-player would say, and it was no wonder, being quick and bold, that he had taken advantage of it. His tone was so tender and so eager that it was impossible to treat his rejoinder as a joke; or to reply to it otherwise than as to a serious aspiration.

'One can't have all one wishes,' she answered gravely, 'and, as Mr. Penryn said in his sermon last Sunday, it is often fortunate for us that we cannot.'

'Still there are some things that we can give to one another if we please,' pleaded Garston, softly. 'There is, for example, no wish of yours, dear Maud, which I would not gratify if it were in my power.'

'Then please, Kit, to drop this subject.'

The answer was curt, no doubt; but Maud was driven to desperation. She was frightened

for herself, lest she should yield to this bold wooer, whom she really liked in so many ways; and alarm when it becomes despair is a sort of courage. Christopher Garston was a very clever fellow, but the reading of a woman's heart was beyond his powers; if he could have read it now he would have disobeyed Maud's orders, and like the valiant sea captain, who would not see his admiral's signals to cease firing, his insubordination might have won the day. As it was he took her words in dudgeon, and for reply only plied his oars with reckless vigour. They flew on in silence down the wooded reach, till suddenly there was a sharp crash; the frail skiff went to pieces under them in an instant, and they found themselves in the river.

‘The cool silver shock’ of the stream wherein you take your ‘header,’ and for which

you are prepared, is a very different thing from the sensation of sudden shipwreck ; but Kit had all his wits about him, and his arm around Maud's waist in a moment, as though he had been a lover on land. There was ground beneath his feet, though very little of it, nor was the stream above his shoulders, but it was so strong that he could only stand in it by taking hold of the sharp rock in front of him that had caused the catastrophe. For the moment Maud had no distinct impression of anything, except that she was half drowned, but she knew that the stream was carrying her feet from under her, and that Kit's arm alone sustained her.

‘ Oh, Kit, where is the boat ? ’

‘ The boat has gone to pieces, darling, but you shall be saved.’

His tone was confident, but his mind was

very far from being so. On both sides of them the current ran swift and deep. The Tusk itself, on which they had come to grief had only one jagged tip out of water, and the tide was rising. It was with great difficulty, even now, that he could maintain his footing with such an incumbrance as poor drooping Maud upon his arm. He looked to left and right in vain for any sight of aid ; except by themselves and the fishermen of the village, who were now at sea, and would not return till evening, the river was little used by any one. Doubtless she read in his face the fears that belied his words.

‘ You are a strong swimmer, Kit,’ she cried, with a shiver of terror, ‘ but you can never get to land with me.’

‘ I can and I will,’ he answered boldly.

‘ No, no ; that will be to drown us both,’

she murmured. 'Can I not cling to the rock till you get help?'

'The Tusk is almost under water now,' he answered, in quick grave tones, 'and will serve even to hold on to but a few minutes longer. We must take our chance. Listen, Maud! Our deliverance lies more in your hands than in mine. If you cling to me, save where I tell you, we shall both perish, but if you hold by my braces—have you got them tight?—that will leave my arms free, and you will be supported by my shoulders. Do not struggle, but trust to me.'

'I do, I will,' she murmured.

'Take breath ; keep cool ; have courage. Mark has told you that I was the best swimmer of all Ludlow's boys ; and for once he did not flatter me. Are you ready?—off!'

Alone he would have plunged into the

stream like an otter ; but with his heavy burden, and doubtful (as he afterwards observed) whether the cargo would not ‘ shift,’ he had to use great precaution. He was obliged to forego all the advantages of an impetus, and to take the water more like a boat than a man. The next minute, however, he was battling with the stream ; his eyes fixed on a little promontory they had just passed. Every limb and muscle were doing their uttermost, and his lungs working like a forcing pump ; but of all that he was unconscious ; his mind was where his eyes were. If he could only reach that branch which swept the water yonder all would be well ; and he would have given ten years of his life to grasp it.

Maud behaved to admiration. At first she was terribly frightened ; the common phrase ‘ only a plank between us and eternity ’ was, by

comparison with her case, a synonym for security. The plank would have made all the difference in the world to her. Drenched, breathless, frigid, with some power unseen ever striving to drag her downwards, none, who have not known what it is to feel the dark waters of death closing in upon them, can picture what she felt ; but Kit's bold words ' I can and I will ' ever rang in her ears, and Kit's advice, ' Do not struggle, trust to me,' were the lessons her pale dumb lips rehearsed throughout that awful passage. Three times the wave passed over her face : once she sank beneath it : it was plain that Kit had overrated his powers though not his courage : he never lost heart, but strength and breath only just sufficed to accomplish what he had set them to do.

It was well that the long-looked-for branch hung where it did, since, but for its friendly aid,

it would have been difficult for him, even when they reached the bank, to climb it.

After they had taken breath, and were standing in safety, hand in hand, upon the little promontory, Maud looked back upon the river.

‘Oh, Kit, what a risk you ran for my sake,’ exclaimed she, with heartfelt gratitude. ‘You might have saved yourself with ease.’

‘Myself!’ he interrupted scornfully. ‘What would life have been to me without you? But come, you are wet and shivering. I must take you home at a run, if possible.’

The proposition was welcome to her, since it precluded further talk; indeed, save for a word or two of encouragement, he said no more to her till they reached the village. So tender were her feelings towards him, that if he had put Love’s question at that time it would,

without doubt, have had the reply he longed for ; but, as it was, he had spoken at once too much and too little. There had been nothing definite in that 'What would life have been without you ?' and certainly nothing binding. On the other hand, it had been very significant ; nor was it likely that he had forgotten what Maud had said not half an hour before, though with no idea of its application to her own case. 'If any one had saved *my* life I should have been theirs for ever.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE TWO COUNSELLORS.

MEADE and Trenna of course had heard the news of the safety of the missing ones when they reached the village, while a mounted messenger from the Knoll had met the carriage folks on the road with the same glad tidings. It was received with great delight by all, but with a difference ; by Mrs. Medway, for example, with devotional thankfulness, and by Trenna with a sort of ecstatic rapture.

It would have been hardly an exaggeration to say that her brother was her divinity, and where such feelings in respect to kinship are

very powerful the religious instinct is generally in inverse proportion. Mr. Garston, who had kept most command over his feelings even when matters were in doubt, took what the gods had given him—or at least had not taken away from him—without much demonstration of gratitude. To a cynic, who had heard the Mogadion gossip, it might perhaps have occurred that the idea of a recommencement of outgoings had entered into the attorney's mind coincidently with his son's safety ; and it is certainly curious how the letters L.S.D. will sometimes, like those engraved on a shop-window, interfere with the exhibition from without.

Again, none rejoiced more than Frank Meade at Maud's safety (as for Kit it is enough to say that Frank would have risked his own life for him—as he would have done for anybody else); but it was undoubtedly a painful

thought to him that she owed her safety to Christopher Garston. He was not jealous of, that young man in the ordinary sense ; indeed, considering what we know of his late adventures with Miss Trenna, it would have been monstrous indeed had he entertained such a feeling ; he did not even say to himself, ‘How I wish the opportunity of saving Maud Medway had presented itself to me instead of to that fellow!’ But he greatly regretted that it had offered itself to Kit. He felt that the circumstance would draw the tie of friendship between him and the family at the Knoll more tightly than before ; and he had never approved of that friendship.

As to Mark, the late catastrophe of his friend and sister, or rather their escape from it, affected him in a very curious way. He was thankful beyond measure that they had been

spared to him, for he loved them both, the one hardly less than the other; it was almost as difficult for him to imagine how the world would look to him without Kit in it, as to picture the Knoll without Maud, and to have lost sister and friend at one fell stroke would have prostrated him indeed. But for him, too, in the circumstances of Maud's rescue, there was something of bitterness. He did not grudge Kit his share of it, *qua* Kit; indeed, since he had not rescued her himself he was glad that it had fallen to his friend's lot to do it; but it annoyed him to reflect that had he been in Kit's place Maud would undoubtedly have perished. What gave him something worse than annoyance, a sense of inferiority, was that when the question of help had arisen, Meade, and not he, had been the one to fly to the rescue; and with him—

and this was a positive humiliation—had flown Trenna. He, Mark Medway, a man, had remained behind with his mother, and gone home like useless baggage in the waggonette, while Trenna Garston, a girl, had done her best to save his sister from a watery grave.

Such self-upbraidings were of course irrational. To be an indifferent oar and a clumsy swimmer are neither of them moral offences; and it was plain that, with all the good-will in the world, no person unskilled in rowing and swimming would in the case in question have been of any use. Nevertheless, Mark despised himself for these shortcomings, and brooded over what had happened in a manner very unbecoming an antiquary and a philosopher: and the circumstance seemed in his mother's eyes to develop that very faculty of despond-

ency which above all things she dreaded to see in him, lest it might be there by inheritance.

Like Job he had his two Comforters in Frank and Kit, and to do them justice they showed themselves much more sympathetic than Eliphaz and Bildad. Their treatment of his case was indeed altogether different. At one time they endeavoured to show that he was an excellent character, most unnecessarily and unjustly troubled; and at another they chaffed him.

‘One can’t do everything, old fellow, you know,’ said Eliphaz, ‘and you who are such a swell at antiquities cannot be expected to excel in modern accomplishments. Any fool can swim and row.’

‘I didn’t even know in what part of the river, though I had lived by it almost all my

days,' murmured Mark, woefully, 'that hateful Tusk was.'

'Why should you?' urged Meade (who of course was Bildad, the second fiddle). 'Is it not enough to know a Druid stone when you see it, and even to be able to decipher the old Cornish description on it?'—this was a playful allusion to a certain case, analogous to the famous mistake in the 'Antiquary,' where poor Mark had signally failed. 'Is it not enough, I say, to be on familiar terms with anything old-world, without being acquainted with a mere modern erection like the Tusk—I dare say not a thousand years old?'

'Then to think of Trenna,' continued Mark, pacing to and fro impatiently, and without paying the least regard to the well-meant banter of his friends, 'to think of a girl like Trenna.'

‘If you talk of her in that contemptuous way,’ interrupted Kit, ‘I’ll tell her.’

‘Pshaw, I don’t mean *that*; of course she’s one in a thousand, and as to rowing, she has the pluck and skill of a Grace Darling.’

‘Come, that’s much better,’ said Kit, encouragingly. ‘I’ll tell her you say she is a darling.’

But chaff and argument were equally thrown away upon Mark. He took his uselessness to heart in what was really a very strange way, and which might have alarmed even a less anxious mother than Mrs. Medway.

She had, however, the great advantage of possessing two counsellors devoted to her interests, one, as we have said, who knew her story, and could judge better than most men whether Mark’s present behaviour had any

connection with it ; the other, not in possession of that secret, but who was thoroughly acquainted with Mark's character, namely, his friend and tutor, Mr. Penryn. Having to choose between the clergyman and the Doctor, the lady naturally decided on consulting the former first ; and under pretence of ' shopping ' in Mogadion, she ordered her little carriage with the Exmoor ponies, one afternoon, while ' the young people ' were at lawn tennis (a phrase which as usual did not include Mark, who was in his own room), and drove over to the Rectory.

This was situated on the sea-shore in a little wooded bay, very picturesque and retired. It was one of the oldest houses in the place, but stood altogether outside the town. Indeed, the town had early deserted both it and the church (which was beside it) for the larger and more

convenient bay which formed the harbour, a circumstance which would not have wounded the feelings of the present incumbent, even if it had occurred in his time instead of a hundred years ago. The Rector loved his fellow-creatures ; his grave benevolent face and kind blue eyes convinced you of the fact at sight ; but he preferred them at a distance. He was willing enough to go to them when they wanted him, but he did not encourage visits. No one ever did him the injustice to call him a misanthrope ; but his neighbours thought him a bit of a hermit, and from their point of view they were right. His world lay in his books, and when he had done his parish duties, or had partaken of the hospitalities which he could not decline without discourtesy, he returned to his world with eagerness, and plunged into the vortex of archæology.

His favourite haunt was an old-fashioned summer-house in his garden close by the sea, where, with a book in his hand, and his fore finger on his cheek, as though he would impose silence on the Universe, his studies pursued him. The inversion of the usual expression suited his case exactly. Whenever he was alone and comfortably seated, there came into his brain, unsummoned, some picture of the Past, not of his own past, for his life had been so uneventful as scarce to admit of illustration, but of the prehistoric time in which, in a sense, he dwelt. Though an ecclesiastic himself, it is not too much to say that he felt a more mystic reverence for the Druidical priesthood than for any other. To hear the mistletoe spoken of lightly (as it is apt to be at Christmas-time by the young and thoughtless) distressed his feelings, nor did he ever find himself among

the sacred stones, especially when they were arranged in a circle—which marks a family burial-place—without baring his grey head as though in presence of the dead of to-day. If he had had his way, I believe he would have made it a *sine quâ non* in all Cabinet Councils that the Ministers should sit on stones (to which custom his favourite sect attached the utmost importance), instead of chairs. He pretended, indeed, that Science rather than Superstition dictated this preference ; and even went so far as to remark on one occasion in Dr. Meade's presence, that 'it was certainly very curious how almost all ancient nations assigned a certain virtue to stones. Sleeping upon them, for example, the Druids thought, was a cure for lameness.'

'Did they, by Jingo !' broke in the Doctor.  
'I will answer for it that nine out of ten were

made worse by it, and the tenth man crippled for life.'

And, indeed, unless rheumatism is a modern invention, it is probable that his view of the stone-couch cure was the correct one. Nothing made the Doctor so furious as, when he in his turn was eulogising the remedies of the past at the expense of those of the present, to liken him to the Rector.

The antagonism between these two worthies made the keeping in with both of them a delicate and difficult task for Mrs. Medway, and caused her present visit to Mr. Penryn, for the purpose of taking counsel of him as to what should be done with Mark, to be made as secretly and discreetly as though he were some ancient sibyl. If the Doctor should come to know of it he would naturally have thought himself the proper person to whom

she should have applied for consultation and advice.

Mrs. Medway found the Rector in his bower poring over his books, from which he ordinarily separated himself to receive people with the alacrity of a fly from treacle. In the present case, however, he rose willingly enough, and offered his visitor a seat which would have been a low one but for a quarto volume which reposed upon it.

‘You here, my dear Mrs. Medway, and without Mark ! This is, indeed, an honour.’

‘I wish Mark had been with me,’ returned the old lady, naïvely. ‘The fact is, my dear Mr. Penryn, it is upon his account that I have called upon you.’

‘That takes the guilt off the gingerbread,’ answered the Rector, smiling ; ‘however, that you have come at all is a thing to be thankful

for. I hope Miss Maud has quite recovered from the effects of her late adventure.'

'Oh, Maud is all right, Mr. Penryn, it is Mark, poor fellow, who has suffered from it.'

'But he wasn't *in* it,' argued the Rector, amused at what he considered this new proof of the widow's idolatry to her son; 'however he may have wept for Maud's misfortune, he couldn't have got so wet as she did.'

'Oh, it isn't that; he is not sorry for her, but for himself; that's what makes me so miserable about him.'

The Rector's eyes had opened pretty wide already; his mouth now began to follow their example.

'Oh, indeed,' he gasped, 'it seems a very bad case.'

'It *is*, Mr. Penryn,' answered the lady, gravely, 'and may be sadder yet;' and then

she told him all about it. How Mark reproached himself and moped, and had lost his health and spirits, without any natural explanation of the matter. 'Frank Meade, who is a very sensible young fellow, you know, thinks Mark would be the better for seeing more of the world.'

'Does he?' grunted the Rector.

'Well, you know, for a young man,' pleaded Mrs. Medway, who knew what the grunt meant, 'it is not well to be alone, or what is as good as being alone, to be surrounded by a parcel of women.'

'You think that as good as being alone, do you?' inquired Mr. Penryn, silyly.

'I say for a young man,' reiterated the widow. 'It is really abominable of you, Mr. Penryn, when I come here to consult you—instead of going to Dr. Meade, which perhaps

I should have done—to turn all that I tell you into ridicule. Mark is really in a state of mind which gives me serious cause for apprehension.’

‘I hope not that,’ said the Rector, soothingly, sobered at once by this allusion to his rival, ‘out I can easily believe he is troubled in mind; he promised to verify some quotation in Borlase for me by Monday, which he would certainly have done had he been himself. Mark is the very soul of punctuality.’

‘He is, indeed,’ murmured Mrs. Medway, unctuously, as though he had been called the ‘soul of honour.’

‘In that respect he might have been a very Druid,’ continued the Rector, reflectively. ‘In order to give weight and importance to their public assemblies they practised the custom of cutting to pieces whomsoever came last. This

diminished in time the attendance, but insured promptness; perhaps it was the origin of our present fashionable phrase, "Small and early."

'Perhaps,' assented Mrs. Medway; 'but we are wandering from the point as to what is to be done with Mark. What do you think of sending him for a few terms to the University?'

'A few terms!' echoed the Rector. 'When you send a lad to college it is like gathering the Marshwort (or *Samolus*)—or as Medea gathered her magical herbs—there must be no looking behind you; he must take his degree.'

'Oh, but that would take three years,' expostulated the widow; 'I could never spare Mark for three years. I only thought of the University as a little change for him.'

'The University would feel greatly flattered, I am sure,' said the Rector, 'to be thus recom-

mended, like Malvern or Buxton, for a fit of the blues. Are you aware, my dear madam, that among the Druids education took no less than twenty years for its accomplishment, and no one was eligible for any public employment without it? However, perhaps, as you say—though I shall be very sorry, personally, to lose him—a few terms at Oxford——’

‘But I thought of sending him to Cambridge,’ put in the widow, ‘so that he could be with his friend Kit, you know. You see no objection to that, do you?’ For the Rector’s face had suddenly become very grave.

‘Well, I never thought of Cambridge. Why, goodness gracious, they would make him learn mathematics at Cambridge!’

‘Do you think that would be bad for him?’ inquired the widow, apprehensively.

‘I think it would be a degradation of his

intellect, madam. A man who, being yet a minor, has corrected the antiquarian Borlase in more than one particular, should hardly be set to learn, for example, logarithms.'

'I know you are not fond of Kit,' said Mrs. Medway; 'but you cannot deny that Kit is fond of Mark.'

The remark seemed altogether devoid of pertinence, but it brought the colour into the Rector's wrinkled cheek. It was not after all, it seemed, the fear of Mark's being taught mathematics which had led him to suggest Oxford and not Cambridge.

'Besides,' continued Mrs. Medway, 'if Kit's society could have harmed Mark it would have harmed him long ago, Mr. Penryn.'

'I never said Christopher Garston's society harmed Mark,' said the Rector, 'and I readily admit that he never meant to harm him.'

‘Very good, then we may dismiss that notion altogether. Now, on the other hand, upon all worldly matters Kit is qualified to advise Mark.’

‘No doubt,’ said the Rector, in a tone that implied, ‘he has a superfluity of that kind of knowledge, I don’t deny.’

‘Altogether,’ said Mrs. Medway, ‘I think it’s the best thing to be done. What do *you* say?’

‘My dear madam, when I see that a lady has made up her mind I never say anything. As for me—speaking selfishly—I deplore the resolution you have come to. I shall miss Mark more than I can say.’

‘Of course you will,’ rejoined the widow, simply; ‘but how much more shall I miss him? It is only the necessity of the case, you may be sure, that compels me to suggest such

a course. I am sincerely glad to find, however, that it meets with your approval.'

The Rector smiled a little sardonically.

'Then we shall have him back,' she added, consolingly, 'in the vacations just the same as ever.'

'You think so. My dear madam, it was the custom of the priestesses of Bacchus to unroof his temple, and to endeavour to restore it, before sunset, in exactly the same condition as before. If one of the ladies omitted to replace a stone in its exact position she was put to death.'

'That must have made them very careful,' observed the widow.

'No doubt; but for all that, the temple was never the same temple. And this will be the case with Mark.'

Mrs. Medway laughed at this as she would

have laughed at any suggestion of change in her beloved son, and took her leave well pleased. If the Rector had not fallen into her plans with effusion, he had, at all events, made no serious objection to them.

Flushed with success, she resolved to call upon the Doctor on her way home, and obtain, if possible—so superfluous are women in their wants and ways—another opinion in favour of her own ideas.

It is but fair, perhaps, to add that she was a little alarmed lest the Doctor should hear of her having consulted the Rector from any other lips but her own. I am afraid she gave that excellent physician to understand that Mr. Penryn's opinion had been a more casual one than it had actually been, while, on the other hand, she by no means exaggerated the Rector's sympathy with her

scheme. She knew human nature, or, at all events, her present companion, better than to do that.

‘You see Mr. Penryn is a University man himself, Doctor ; and he has his fears about mathematics, and so forth ; in short, that dear Mark’s brain may be overwrought.’

‘By study at college !’ returned the Doctor acidly ; ‘you may set your mind at rest as to that, madam.’

‘Well now, that is just what I wanted to hear from you, my dear Dr. Meade. You know Mark so thoroughly, and yet, as I understand, you see no objection to his going to Cambridge more than to Oxford ?’

The Doctor pushed out his lower lip, which was his manner of expressing contemptuous indifference.

‘I see no more objection to Tweedledum

than to Tweedledee," was his not very encouraging reply.

'Yes, but at Cambridge, remember, Mark will have Kit, at all events for a month or two, to advise him, and see that he does not get into scrapes.'

'Ah, indeed! Well, I should think Kit, as you call him, was not without experience in that way.'

It was curious how both the Rector and the Doctor, who agreed in nothing else, were at one upon the subject of Christopher Garston. Their common prejudice on this matter, however, made very little impression upon Mrs. Medway. Kit was her son's bosom friend, and therefore *her* friend, and, though she could not but perceive his unpopularity with her two counsellors, she ignored it.

'Young men will be young men,' she said;

‘I dare say Christopher Garston is not faultless. But my son Mark, as you know, Doctor, is very different from the common type.’

‘He is different now, madam, because his bringing up has been different. Nay, I don’t mean to say he is not an excellent good fellow, and will always remain so, but the simplicity which is so attractive to us all will vanish if you send him elsewhere. Perhaps, however, you have made up your mind to a change in him.’

Mrs. Medway had made up her mind for nothing of the sort. It staggered her not a little that both Dr. Meade and Mr. Penryn should have warned her that Mark might not return from college the same Mark she had sent there: but she had thought out her plan already with too many tears to be disheartened anew about it. And the necessity of something being done with him seemed imperative

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## CHAPTER IX.

## AN INTERRUPTED GAME.

WHILE Mrs. Medway, like a skilful lawyer from not too willing witnesses, was collecting corroboratory evidence of the wisdom of her own conclusions, her 'young people'—in which term she was wont to include Frank and the Garstons, as though they had been her own belongings—were prosecuting their lawn tennis at the Knoll, as though life depended on their exertions.

When I watch folks at that pastime, who have any claim to be considered proficient, or, as the phrase goes, who 'rather fancy them-

selves ' at it, I sometimes wonder whether any other occupation in the world was ever pursued with the like vigour and intensity. One half such a spirit thrown into business matters would make a man a millionaire ; or, if it took him in what may be called ' the other direction ' (towards devotion), would set him up in good practice as a saint. Frank was not quite so agile as Kit, but had a longer reach. Maud was not so quick on her legs as Trenna, but was more skilful. A better match than Frank and Trenna, *versus* Kit and Maud, it was impossible to imagine.

Mark, with a book in his hand, watched them dreamily from his window and envied their enthusiasm, which, at the same time, it wearied him to witness. Could it be the same blood, he wondered, that was bounding through his sister's veins, mounting in roses to her

cheeks, and inspiring her to those feats of grace and swiftness, as stagnated in his own? Was it possible that Frank and Kit, with all that skill and *élan*, were really the contemporaries of such an one as himself, buried in books, living in the past more than in the present, and without interest in human affairs? Of all the players Trenna attracted him the least, and this too he knew was a proof of his singularity and isolation. He saw that she was beautiful, as he saw that the scene beneath him—the garden, the wilderness, and the sea—were beautiful; and yet in the pleasure which her beauty conferred on his own sex, and which in Frank Meade, for example, aroused the keenest admiration, and would sometimes fill his face, like torch applied to torch with an answering glow, he had no share. Kit's voice was music to him, but Kit's sister's voice fell on his ear

and touched no responsive chord. Was he made for friendship, then, and not for love? or was he even made for friendship? Kit and Frank were attached to him, he knew; but, as it seemed to him, without desert. Their affection for him was as irrational as his mother's idolatry. He saw himself a dreamer, inanimate and useless, a mere stick for others' tendrils.

As a matter of fact, Mark Medway possessed one of the simplest and sweetest of natures with which man was ever endowed, and by this magic attracted his fellow-creatures. What is still more rare, he combined considerable learning with great modesty. He had absolutely no egotism; the present was his first attack of self-consciousness, and it was therefore a severe one. His regrets that he could neither swim nor row were about as

reasonable as though some devoted missionary should bewail his incompetency at five-card cribbage ; but they were genuine nevertheless.

There are occasions when the student envies the athlete ; not for his thews and sinews, indeed, and still less for the feats he accomplishes with them, but for the succour and protection they enable him to afford to others ; and this was one of them.

Mark did not grudge it to Kit that he owed his sister's life to him, nor was his weight of obligation to him less than when he had saved his own ; but in this case there was a certain sense of humiliation. He had always thought himself the inferior of both his friends, but the reflection had never before pained him. How was it that they appreciated the mere joys of living—

The leaping from rock up to rock,  
The cool silver shock<sup>\*</sup>  
Of the pool's living waters,

while to him they were nought, and never had been? It was not that he was an old man before his time, but that he seemed to himself never to have been a man at all, nor a boy. How like boys they ran hither and thither with cunning hand and eye, struck the ball where they would, and enjoyed their own strength and skill! He watched them as some inmate of the cloister, doubtful of his calling and dissatisfied with his lot, might watch two worldlings at their play—and envied them.

As he did so, he saw Lucy, who fulfilled the duties of parlour-maid as well as of Maud's handmaid in their simple household, come out into the tennis-ground with a letter. For a few moments she stood there unnoticed, not liking to interfere with the game, but presently

Trenna missed an easy ball. There was a storm of disapproval from her opponents, who were critics first and rivals afterwards. Frank was gallantly about to frame an excuse for his partner, when she exclaimed, 'There is Lucy; there is something the matter.'

Lucy, it was true, was looking towards Kit, with the letter in her hand, otherwise there was nothing to account for Trenna's exclamation. At the time no one thought anything of it; but one of the party had afterwards reason to remember it.

'It is for you, Mr. Christopher,' said Lucy; 'I was to ask, please, was there any answer?'

'For *me*, is it?' Kit opened the letter, read it through in a flash, and thrust it into his pocket. 'I am afraid I must break up your game,' he said; 'I am wanted at home.'

‘What’s the matter? Mr. Garston is not ill, I hope,’ said Maud.

‘No; the Governor is all right, thank you. It’s a matter of business.’

Here his eye fell on Lucy, a comely, honest-looking country lass. The concern in the countenances of the others was visibly reflected on her face; anything that touched the family and their friends touched Lucy.

‘Tell the messenger,’ he began thoughtfully——

‘Please, sir, it’s Abel,’ she interposed. ‘Lor, Miss Trenna, how white you do look; shall I get you a glass of water?’

Notwithstanding her brother’s assurance that their father was in health, Trenna indeed had turned deadly pale. To Lucy’s proposal, however, she shook her head, keeping her eyes fixed on her brother.

‘Tell Abel,’ continued Kit, ‘that I will come home at once. He must walk back, and I will take the mare.’

‘I shall go home with you, Kit,’ whispered Trena, gravely.

‘What nonsense! The horse can’t carry double.’

‘No; but the skiff can. Otherwise I shall row down alone.’

Christopher Garston bit his lip; it was rare indeed for his sister to be so peremptory with him.

‘You can do no good,’ he said hesitatingly.

‘I can help to prevent harm,’ she answered meaningly.

It was curious that throughout this conversation, which the brother and sister held apart, the former had not even alluded to the nature of the tidings he had just received. A glance

full of significance had flashed between them when Kit had said, 'I am wanted at home,' and no further explanation, it seemed, was necessary.

'My dear Maud,' said Trenna, turning to her friend, 'I must go back with Kit, though I hope it will be only for an hour or two. The waters are troubled at home,' she added, in a low voice, 'and the presence of the oil is necessary.'

Maud was too well acquainted with the state of domestic affairs at the Grey House, as Mr. Garston's residence was called, to make any remonstrance ; but Mark, whom the disturbance had brought down from his study, objected strongly, though, characteristically enough, not so much to the departure of the young lady as to that of her brother.

Kit had run upstairs to change his clothes,

but immediately on his return Mark had tackled him.

‘Now you promised us, Kit,’ said he, with his hand upon the other’s shoulder, ‘you would stay with us the whole day. I have seen nothing of you since luncheon. If it is only a little breeze with the governor, let it blow over.’

‘But this is not a little breeze, Mark,’ answered Kit in a low tone; ‘it’s a tornado.’

‘Good Heavens! What’s the matter? Can I do anything?’

His tone was eager, and even anxious. It was impossible to doubt the genuineness of his sympathy, the tenderness of his regard.

Perhaps it was the thought of the other’s friendship, and of the simplicity with which his aid was offered, that caused Christopher Garston to hold out his hand. ‘You can do nothing, old

fellow, thank you,' he said. ' Things may turn out better than one expects; and in that case I shall come over to-morrow.'

' And if not ? '

' Well, I shan't see you quite so soon.'

' Then I shall come to Mogadion.'

' No, Mark ; at least not to the Grey House, unless you hear from me.'

It was arranged, too, that Trenna's ' things ' should remain at the Knoll in case of her return.

The same evening there came a messenger —not Abel—with a little note.

' MY DEAR MAUD,—I am sorry to say I cannot leave home till to-morrow. We are in trouble here ; nothing of much consequence as concerns ourselves, but something which may affect others in whom you are interested. I

will be with you in the morning ; in the meantime say nothing of this.

‘ Yours ever,

‘ TRENNA GARSTON.’

It was very difficult to ‘ say nothing of this.’

Maud’s world was a very small one, and the phrase ‘ others in whom you are interested ’ was terribly tantalising. Nevertheless she held her tongue.

## CHAPTER X.

## IN THE BOUDOIR.

IN the morning Trenna arrived at the Knoll according to promise; but it was not the same Trenna. She looked five years older; her olive cheeks were pale, and had that drawn, pinched look which is usually the result of protracted physical pain. Her eyelids were swollen from much weeping, and at the sight of Mrs. Medway and her daughter her tears welled forth anew.

‘Don’t let Mark see me just now,’ she said, an unwonted touch of vanity that went home to the two women’s hearts.

‘Come up to my boudoir,’ said Maud; ‘we shall there be safe from all intrusion.’

A shiver passed over Trenna. ‘That will be making too much of matters,’ she objected; ‘your mother so seldom sits there. Mark will wonder.’

‘Mark will wonder!’ echoed Maud with a ghost of a laugh. ‘Mark would not wonder if we sat on the roof-top like sparrows.’

‘But the servants?’

‘The servants are only Lucy. Lucy is one of ourselves as far as tale-bearing is concerned, and indeed, in other respects, she is the most honest, faithful creature.’

‘That is true,’ assented Trenna gravely.

So they went upstairs to Maud’s boudoir; a gem of a room hung with water-colours by her own hand; one of them in a very pretty oaken frame carved by Trenna—her only accomplish-

ment in the way of the fine arts. In a recess within double doors, also Trenna's handiwork, stood on an easel a portrait of Maud's father, very like her brother. 'Mark has the same far-off look,' she used to say, 'as though he were in the world, but not of it;' a remark she would never have uttered had she known how it made her mother tremble. In a corner a small piano, on the table her favourite books in pretty bindings, 'not too good for human nature's daily' handling. On the wall a dainty fishing-rod, innocent of victims as a militiaman's sword; above it her racket. Everything in this little apartment was a birthday gift, and spoke of love and friendship.

From the window you looked out on dream-land; garden, and woodland, and the river winding hundreds of feet beneath it without sound or motion, and in the distance the blue

sea, from which the summer wind brought a fresh message with every breath.

Gentle comes the world to those  
Who are cast in gentle mould,

was the fit motto, Trenna used to say, to be written over Maud's boudoir door. Perhaps the place made a greater impression on her by reason of its contrast with her own room at the Grey House, which, but for a present or two from Kit and Maud herself, was bare enough. Upon this occasion, however, she noticed nothing but that the window was open. 'May I shut it, Maud?' were her first words.

'Surely, my dear, if you feel cold.'

'I am not cold, but what I have to say is at present a secret, and not a bird of the air must carry the matter.'

The three sat down with grave faces, and Trenna told her tale.

There had been a robbery at the Grey House ; two hundred pounds in notes had been taken from Mr. Garston's desk.

It was unnecessary to dilate to her present audience on the late owner's state of mind ; they knew him, and could therefore understand it. But that a robbery should have occurred at all astounded them.

'This is the first time,' exclaimed Mrs. Medway, 'that ever I heard of a thief in Mogadion. Is it not possible that your father has mislaid the notes?'

Trenna shook her head, and indeed the next moment Mrs. Medway admitted to herself that her suggestion was a feeble one. Mr. Garston, senior, was liable to forgetfulness about some things, like other people ; he habitually omitted to remember a debtor's circumstances ; he would ignore his own promises

(when they were not on paper), and confused Sundays and week-days deplorably; but he was not a man to forget where he had put his money.

‘Perhaps the parrot has taken it,’ Maud hazarded.

This bird was by rights a cockatoo, but answered affably, if you had a sweet biscuit between your finger and thumb, to the vulgar appellation ‘Poll.’ It was extremely fond of Trenna, over whom it would climb, and croak, and chuckle in the most engaging manner; but even she admitted it had some of the habits of the magpie.

‘Poll has no taste for bank-notes,’ returned Trenna confidently; ‘and besides, he never ventures into papa’s room. They cannot have gone without hands—human hands.’

‘But, Trenna, by whose hands?’

‘That is just the question. Our servants are all Mogadion born, and respectably connected. As I tell my father, neither Joan nor Mary would know what to do with one five-pound note, much more with forty.

‘Has Mr. Garston the numbers of the notes?’ inquired Mrs. Medway.

‘No—yes—indeed, I have the list here,’ and she produced a slip of paper. ‘My father told me to show it to you.’

‘To me!’ cried Mrs. Medway. ‘Lord bless me, my dear; nobody ever pays me a five-pound note. Quite the contrary. That is to say, I settle everything by cheque. It is to the last degree unlikely that one of them should come my way. Does he wish me to act as a detective?’

Mrs. Medway’s tone was indignant. She liked Kit, and she liked Trenna; but, except

that her son's friends were her friends, her affections were personal. She was not one of those feeble folks whose likings are shaped by vicinity. She was on good terms with all her neighbours, but she reserved to herself the right of picking and choosing from her circle of acquaintances her friends. And Mr. Garston, senior, was still unpicked on the stem of acquaintanceship.

‘I am very sorry,’ continued Trenna nervously; ‘I was afraid it would distress you, and Maud also; but you know how I am situated. Papa was imperative, and I had no choice. I was told to give you the list.’

‘But what am I to do with it, child?’ inquired Mrs. Medway, regarding the slip of paper as if it were a county court summons, or a writ. ‘Does he want me to frame and

glaze it, and hang it up in the drawing-room?’

‘Oh, pray don’t laugh at me; and, still more, don’t be angry with me, Mrs. Medway. Things are much worse than anything you can imagine. Papa thinks—that is, he doesn’t know what to think—that it is Abel.’

‘Abel!’ exclaimed both ladies together;  
‘Abel Deeds!’

‘Yes. I knew you would be shocked,’ continued Trena in nervous quivering tones.  
‘I am shocked myself. We are all shocked.’

‘Abel Deeds never stole those notes,’ said Mrs. Medway, positively. ‘They are an honest family. I have known him from a boy. Do you suppose that Rachel Deeds can have a thief for a son?’

‘And Lucy, too,’ put in Maud; ‘why, it would break poor Lucy’s heart even to think

he could be suspected of such a thing. No, no, Trenna; you are wrong.'

'I may be; I *am*, very likely. Good Heavens! do you suppose I *want* it to be Abel?'

Here she burst into tears and rocked herself to and fro. 'I wish I was dead,' she murmured. 'Oh Maud, Maud!'

'My dear Trenna, pray calm yourself,' said Maud gently. 'Mamma knows—don't you, mamma? that it is not your fault; that you have no alternative. But this comes upon us so suddenly, and is so shocking. It could hardly be worse if we ourselves were suspected of such a thing. Oh, my poor Lucy!'

'What makes your father suspect Abel, Trenna?' inquired Mrs. Medway. 'I suppose he has some grounds for such an accusation.'

‘He makes no accusation, Mrs. Medway ; that was what I was by all means to say—because—because——’

‘Because to make a false charge would be libellous,’ suggested Mrs. Medway, in chilling tones.

‘No, no ; it isn’t that. Pray bear with me. He said—my father said—that Maud was to be careful not to put Lucy on her guard. Not that Lucy knows anything about it,’ she added hurriedly ; ‘only if she knew that Abel was in peril she might conceal things.’

‘I am quite sure that Lucy has nothing to conceal,’ said Maud.

‘Not that she knows of at present, but she might know of it. The matter stands in this way. Very thoughtlessly, very foolishly, I mentioned how you had once shown me Lucy’s savings the other day—the money her

brother gave to her, and which you keep for her.'

'You had no business to do that, Trenna,' said Maud; 'though to be sure you might retort that I had no business to show it to you. It was only, however, because it gave me such pleasure to be her banker.'

'I have said that it was thoughtless and foolish to mention it,' pleaded Trenna; 'can I say more?'

'The question is, did you mention it in connection with this business?' observed Mrs. Medway, gravely. 'If you did so it was cruel and unkind; there, there, I see you are sorry for it, my dear. Let us say no more.'

'*Sorry* for it,' cried Trenna, bitterly. 'Yes, I *am* sorry for it. And yet I must say more. What papa wishes is that you should see for yourself, without saying a word about it,

whether any of the missing notes are among Lucy's savings. You know you told me that Abel gave her something quite lately.'

'I will not do it,' said Maud, flatly. 'Mr. Garston may look for them himself, if he pleases, but I will not do it.'

'Yet if they are not there, dear Maud, no harm will be done. And if they *are* there——'

'I will lay my life they are not there, Trenna.'

'My dear Maud, Trenna is right,' put in Mrs. Medway, gravely. 'She is only doing her duty, and it is not a pleasant one.'

Trenna threw up her hands, as if in appeal to High Heaven itself. That she was deeply moved was certain, and yet there was an occasional exaggeration in her manner that was not altogether natural. She had, doubtless,

pictured the scene to herself as she came along, and was, therefore, in some measure, prepared for it.

‘Pleasant!’ she repeated, in a pitiful voice.  
‘Ah, if you could only read my heart.’

‘If Maud will not look in the box, I *will*,’ said Mrs. Medway; ‘only Lucy herself must be present. Do you agree to that, Trenna?’

‘Yes, yes, to everything. Only let us get it over.’

Her face was white as the sheet of paper she held in her hand, and which trembled in it like a gossamer.

‘Then I will ring the bell for Lucy,’ said Mrs. Medway.

## CHAPTER XI.

## LUCY DEEDS.

MAUD rose and moved to the closed window, through which she affected to look out ; but of wood and river and crag, and even of the roses that climbed about the casement, she saw nothing ; she was picturing to herself a humble but faithful friend about to suffer an unjust humiliation. Mrs. Medway kept her seat ; but her fingers played nervously upon the table, and her usually serene and placid face showed great emotion. For a woman she had an exceptionally strong sense of justice ; but mingled with it there was all the indignation of a

woman, which, when the wrong-doing affects her nearly, no more respects its proper channel than a stream that has burst its banks. She was unconsciously regarding Trenna with great disfavour.

‘Will you speak to Lucy, or shall I?’ she inquired coldly.

‘Oh, not I—not I,’ cried Trenna, with a quick gesture of alarm. ‘Why need anybody speak? Why need she ever know?’

‘Because I will have no underhand doings here,’ answered Mrs. Medway.

It was a very cruel speech, and one she would have never uttered in cold blood. Every one knew that matters at the Grey House were not as they should be; that its master was a difficult one to manage; and that it required a great deal of diplomacy on his daughter’s part to keep things straight between him and his son.

Trenna flushed to her forehead, but said nothing; the next moment she turned as white as though a ghost, instead of Lucy Deeds, was standing before her.

‘If you please, ma’am, did you ring?’ said Lucy, addressing her mistress. A bright little creature she was, with one of those honest smiles which is the index of a wholesome nature; her eyes, lively rather than intelligent, were wont to assume a look of earnest gravity—which was, in fact, one of distress and puzzlement—at the slightest kink in the cable of life.

‘Have you any objection to show Miss Trenna here the contents of your purse?’

‘My purse!’ Astonishment could no further go than was expressed in Lucy’s countenance; she even forgot to say ‘ma’am.’ The next moment, however, with a bright blush and some little awkwardness she made a dive into her pocket.

‘There’s a ring in it, Miss ; but it’s only one I bought last feast time at Mogadion for luck,’ she explained, growing redder than ever, ‘and a dried flower from the Druid Stone, which I once heard Mr. Penryn say was good for fits ; and a fourpenny piece with a hole through it, and that’s all. It is but a poor thing, you see, not a bit like the one Miss Maud gave me——’

‘That is the one Miss Trenna wants to look at,’ interrupted Mrs. Medway ; ‘the one that holds your savings.’

‘I am sure she’s welcome, ma’am,’ said Lucy, but a little stiffly, and with a glance at her young mistress which expressed less satisfaction than surprise. ‘More than half of what it holds comes from her own house ; for Abel is the best of brothers, and never puts by a shilling but what he gives me a sixpence of it.’

Here there was a significant silence, broken only by a little moan from Trenna.

Mrs. Medway, who had intended to have left her to pursue the rest of the inquiry, relented at this.

‘We are curious to see what you have saved, Lucy, and how many bank-notes you have got.’

‘Lor, ma’am, I’ve only got one. Abel gave it me, not a week ago, out of his last wages. And there’s seven pounds in gold besides, is there not, Miss Maud?—and three of *them* were his, God bless him—and fourteen shillings in silver.’

‘There must be no false pretence here,’ said Maud, turning suddenly round. ‘There has something happened at the Grey House, Lucy; some bank-notes are missing; and though we know folks (as in this case) to be as honest as the day, it is necessary when such things happen

to make the fullest investigation. Mr. Garston has sent Miss Trenna, for satisfaction's sake, to compare the numbers of the notes.'

'Lor' bless ye, Miss,' said Lucy, her eyes growing very large and frightened, and filling with tears, she knew not why, 'I've only got one note.'

Her simplicity went to her young mistress's heart. 'If there were fifty, Lucy, I would swear they were honestly come by.'

'Honestly? Why, Mr. Garston don't think I stole it, do 'ee?' inquired the girl, with a flush of indignation. 'It's difficult enough, they say, to pick up a mossel of bread and cheese at the Grey House, much more bank-notes.'

'Lucy, Lucy,' said Mrs Medway, gently.

'I ask your pardon, ma'am,' said Lucy, breathing hard, 'and likewise Miss Maud's.'

'And *I* ask *yours*,' said Trenna, humbly.

‘Do not suppose, Lucy, that I can believe anything ill of you or yours. I am ashamed of myself, though it is no fault of mine, to have come on such an errand.’

Lucy felt that she had been in the wrong to have thrown out that hint concerning the want of hospitality in Mr. Garston’s servants’ hall; but she was quite unequal to frame an apology. The scantiness of her vocabulary, which lies at the root, by-the-bye, of the strong expressions used by the lower classes, and which we are apt to attribute to a love of coarseness, forbade it; but she expressed her penitence in tears.

‘Come, Lucy,’ said Maud, ‘no one but yourself shall touch your money; let us see it.’

Lucy opened a drawer in Maud’s desk, and took out the handsome morocco purse which her young mistress had given her by way of

strong box, and displayed its contents; the little hoard of years contributed by love and toil.

‘This is the bank-note, Miss Trenna, that my brother gave me last week.’

But Trenna shook her head in sign that she would not touch it. Her limbs shook too, and her face was ghastly pale.

Maud took out the note, and unfolded it.

‘I call you all to witness,’ she said, ‘that the number is 28882; you will remember it by the three eights and two two’s—but you had better write it down. What is the matter? Good Heavens! I had forgotten the slip.’

Trenna was staring at the paper with its rows of figures as though a viper had curled itself round her fingers. Maud, who leant over her shoulder, was staring at it too with incredulity and horror mingled in her countenance.

‘Is it there?’ inquired Mrs. Medway, with a silent movement of her lips.

‘It *is* there,’ was her daughter’s dumb reply. There was a painful silence, broken only by a rosebud without tapping importunately against the pane.

‘I don’t understand it, Miss Maud,’ exclaimed Lucy, pitifully. ‘Is there anything wrong with Abel’s note?’

She looked from one to the other in distressed amazement; their silence had not the eloquence which it would have had for any one of trained intelligence. ‘It is not—it surely isn’t—one of those that has been stolen?’

‘It is one of those that are missing,’ said Maud, gently. ‘But the list may not be correct; in any case, we are all quite certain that Abel has done nothing wrong——what are you doing, Lucy?’

The girl had suddenly emptied the contents of the purse upon the table.

‘Please to throw it all away, Miss, or give it to some rich person as doesn’t want it. It’s that way as all poor people’s money ought to go. They has no business to make it, nor to spend it, nor to keep it. They was born to work and not to save; and when they has been worked out there is the workhouse for them. I’ve had pleasure, I own it, in putting this little money together, for I thought it might be useful to mother in her old age, or perhaps to Abel himself if he fell ill and was out of place—but I see now it was all wrong, and worse than useless.’

‘Oh Lucy, Lucy, do not be so bitter,’ cried Maud, imploringly. ‘You have cut poor Miss Trenna, you see’—who indeed was sobbing and trembling like a chidden child—‘to the very heart.’

‘Miss Trenna is a young lady,’ continued Lucy coldly, ‘and ought to know better than to make herself miserable about poor people. If it was her brother now as was accused of a misdeed—not a mere trifle such as breaking a poor girl’s heart, but of something agin the law—she would know where to go for help and advice. Them as makes the law, or lives by it, would hold him harmless. But for such as Abel, as is as free from blame as any here, who shall prove it? God help him—God help his poor mother.’

She hid her face in her rough honest hands, and burst into tears.

‘Lucy, Lucy dear,’ said Maud gently, and with her arm stealing round the poor girl’s waist, ‘you are distressing us all without cause. Abel, as you say, is as innocent of this crime, if a crime indeed has been committed, as mamma

or I. But you make a great mistake in supposing that he is without friends. However ill matters may look for him they will not look ill in our eyes ; and we shall stand by him. If the worst comes to the worst—I mean if there should be a trial—mamma will see he has the best of counsel. If I thought otherwise, I have money of my own which could never be spent in a better cause. I am not one to desert old friends.’

‘Lucy knows that, don’t you, Lucy?’ says Mrs. Medway, cheerfully. ‘Why, if there was neither Miss Maud nor I to do it, my son Mark would see Abel righted.’

‘God bless him, God bless Mr. Mark!’ sobbed Lucy. ‘I was wrong to say the poor had no friends.’

‘Moreover,’ continued Mrs. Medway, ‘you must remember that Abel has no enemies. Mr.

Garston is only seeking his own, and accuses nobody. And as for Mr. Christopher and Miss Trenna, I am sure no one will be more pleased than they when the day comes, as it will come, which shall clear up this unfortunate matter.'

The speaker looked at Trenna as if expecting her to say something on her own account ; but she looked in vain. Trenna had risen from her seat and taken Maud's vacated place at the window, where she stood with her back to the others.

'I don't want any one but them as knows him and believes in him to take Abel's part,' said Lucy sturdily. 'If you please, ma'am, I must go to Mogadion and see mother.'

'Dear me, but is that necessary?' inquired Mrs. Medway in hesitating tones ; 'I mean that your mother should be told. What do *you* say, Trenna?'

Trenna, thus appealed to, turned a pale pained face towards her hostess, and answered in a sad laborious way, that would have been mechanical but for its weariness and distress, 'I fear so; it can be but a matter of time. Rachel must know it sooner or later.'

But Lucy, holding her apron to her eyes with both her hands, like blank Despair, had already found her way to the door.

## CHAPTER XII.

‘ I MEAN TO HAVE JUSTICE.’

IN the country, politics, except at election times, and public matters generally, do not much move men’s minds ; literature attracts but slight attention, and science less ; but, on the other hand, local affairs create an excitement which to the dwellers in town is inconceivable. If an inhabitant of Soho is murdered, and afterwards cut in pieces for the convenience of secret interment, the circumstance affects Bayswater no more than if it had happened in Liverpool ; whereas, in country places, the effect of all incidents depends on nearness, like the shock of a

clap of thunder. In Mogadion, where there were no murders, and no one had been cut up since the days of the Druids, the rumour of a theft of two hundred pounds was certain to make a great noise.

The Medways foresaw this, and were very willing that Lucy should betake herself to Dr. Meade's, lest the news in some sort of connection with Abel should reach his mother's ears by another channel. Mark himself, whose kindness of heart the girl had not exaggerated when she had called him the friend of the poor, insisted on driving her over to Mogadion. She would thereby reach her destination more quickly than on foot, while the fact of her being in his company would show how the family at the Knoll sympathised with her and hers.

It did not strike him that it might also place him in a position of apparent antagonism to

Abel's prosecutor, for such, when the story of the bank-notes came to be told, Mr. Garston would certainly become. Indeed, in his simplicity and tenderness he took it for granted that Mr. Garston, like everybody else, would be distressed to the last degree by the recent discovery, and be chiefly concerned with the problem of how to account for it consistently with Abel's innocence.

'I shall drop Lucy at the Dovecote, and go straight to Kit at once,' he said to Trenna, who with Mrs. Medway and Maud had come to the front door, as their manner was on the occasion of all domestic exoduses, to see him off. Trenna did not reply in words, but a sorrowful nod and a grateful smile acknowledged his forethought.

Next to Lucy, indeed, Mark pitied Kit, whom he knew the news he brought with him

would place in an embarrassing position. Old Garston was hard to hold where any question of gain was concerned; he strained in the leash after his six-and-eightpences, so that his feelings on the occasion of such a loss as the present could be probably only paralleled by the sentiments of the tigress robbed of her young.

It was a great relief to Mark that when he dropped Lucy at Dr. Meade's, according to promise, neither the Doctor nor Frank were visible, and especially that old Rachel did not make her appearance in the little garden. His mind misgave him that their indignation at what had happened would not be confined to the Master of the Grey House, but would extend to all its inmates, however innocent; and, until he had seen Kit, and heard what he had to say, it would be difficult to defend him. Trenna's mention of Lucy's savings, which to an outsider,

and considering its result, would have seemed very sagacious and conducive to the ends of justice, would, in the eyes of Abel's friends, appear most unfortunate, not to say mischievous; for the finding of the note would not shake their faith in the lad one whit, as Mark could well understand, since it did not shake his own.

Indeed, when Abel himself answered his ring at the Grey House gate, and, with simple freedom, inquired after the health of the ladies at the Knoll, he could hardly refrain from taking his hand and assuring him of his unshaken faith in his integrity.

A more faithful, honest creature than Abel Deeds it was difficult to imagine. He had not the personal attractions of his sister, nor the rugged intelligence of old Rachel; but he had a smile, the dryness of which bespoke him no

fool, and a kindliness of expression, which is the best substitute for comeliness, whether in man or woman.

‘Master was in,’ he said; ‘and he believed Mr. Christopher was with him in the parlour.’

This was a small and not very comfortable apartment, but preferred by the lawyer to either drawing-room or dining-room, and which, in consequence of its being used for the reception of his clients, was known as ‘the cobweb.’ The walls were ornamented with a ground plan of the Grey House (including a particular sketch of the drainage), and a picture of the sloop ‘Alicante’ in the act of going to pieces on Penarvon Point. The late Mr. Garston and his little boy had been cast ashore from her; ‘providentially saved’ said the written record beneath the drawing, though, as to that, opinion was divided; and finding Mogadion to his

liking, had established himself there, in what capacity it was never quite understood. Though beginning with nothing but the clothes he stood in—and not much of them—he was supposed to have made a livelihood by money-lending, and it was certain that he had left something behind him which had prospered considerably in his son's hands.

The present owner of the Grey House had married a native of Mogadion with a small fortune of her own, and that most admirable complement of it, no relations; but she had died in giving birth to Christopher, and her decease severed the only tie that bound her husband to his neighbours, with whom he had never succeeded in assimilating himself. Though he had no prejudices of his own to stand in the way of social success, with no class or creed was Mr. Garston popular; and in the domestic

disputes which occasionally arose between him and his children, or rather between him and his son (on whose side Trenna never failed to enlist herself), the public feeling was always in favour of the juniors ; a state of things which had been of no small advantage to Christopher, of whom it was said, whenever he committed any peccadillo, ‘ Who can wonder at it, poor lad, with such a father ! ’

It may easily be imagined, therefore, with what feelings Mark Medway, Kit’s sworn friend, regarded the alien attorney, who had certainly never appeared to him in a less favourable light than on the present occasion. His face, as it strove in vain to frame a smile of welcome, was distorted with suppressed passion ; his dusky cheeks were of that livid hue which an old scar assumes when struck with the hand ; and his

beady eyes wore a sullen glow like a furnace that has recently been 'banked up.'

He came forward with outstretched hand, while Kit stood behind him, smiling cynically, as though to assure the visitor that all the parental wrath of which he might be the witness was a matter of small moment, and especially a thing in which he himself had no share.

'Well—well—what news do you bring from the Knoll?' was the attorney's impatient greeting.

'My mother and sister are quite well' (the attorney's eyes flashed out a look of contemptuous scorn: it was evidently with an effort he restrained himself from an ebullition of temper); 'but they are naturally much distressed at what has happened.'

‘And what *has* happened? Come to the point, sir. I suppose they are not in distress for my sake. It is not *they* who have lost two hundred pounds!’

‘Nevertheless, Mr. Garston, I hope you will believe that they are sorry you have lost it. What, however, of course pains them most is, that any suspicion should attach to your Abel, our Lucy’s brother.’

‘No suspicion does attach to him,’ put in Christopher earnestly. ‘Every one knows——’

‘Hold your tongue, sir,’ broke in the attorney. ‘Let Mr. Medway tell his story.’

The vulgarity of the man’s nature did not permit him to perceive that he was calling Mark Mr. Medway, because somebody (though presumably not Mark) had stolen his money; but Christopher’s face not only indicated that he perceived it, but was full of distressed apology.

‘My story is very short, Mr. Garston, and, I am sorry to say, not wholly satisfactory,’ hesitated Mark. ‘That some unfortunate mistake lies at the bottom of this affair we feel assured, but the fact is that the bank-note in Lucy’s purse of which Trenna spoke to you is identical——’

‘I am glad to hear it. I am most sincerely glad to hear it,’ interrupted Mr. Garston.

The unexpectedness of the exclamation, and, still more, a certain tone of relief in which it was uttered, fairly took Mark’s breath away. He was dumb. The astonishment in his face, however, could hardly escape the attorney’s notice.

‘You are surprised that I am glad,’ he said, in a manner that by comparison with his late behaviour was almost didactic ; ‘yet surely it is better to have detected the real culprit than to suspect innocent people.’

‘But Abel is no culprit, Mr. Garston, of that I am quite convinced,’ answered Mark, quickly.

‘Conviction is matter for a jury,’ replied the other, in the same grave tones, but mingled with a touch of scorn.\* ‘If Lucy Deeds received a note from her brother Abel which was stolen from my desk, Abel Deeds will have to account for its possession, and I must confess, as a lawyer, it strikes me there is some *prima facie* evidence against him. I presume, by-the-by, the purse was opened in the presence of witnesses,’ he broke off, ‘and that the number of the note was taken down in writing.’

‘I believe—I am not sure,’ returned Mark, reluctantly.

‘Now, my good young sir, I hope there is to be no attempt on the part of your folks at home to shield this young man,’ put in the

attorney with sudden vehemence. ‘I allow no claims of friendship nor acquaintanceship where justice has to be done.’

‘My mother knows her duty, sir,’ said Mark, gravely.

‘No doubt—no doubt—and I hope she is prepared to do it. It is very easy to be tender-hearted and sympathetic, and all the rest of it, in these cases, when one is not the actual sufferer. But I mean to have my money back out of somebody, I can tell you.’

Mr. Garston was known beforehand to be a Tartar, so that there was no occasion to scratch him; but now that he *was* scratched he was certainly exhibiting the characteristics of his native race in great perfection.

‘If it is merely the money, sir, sooner than see an innocent person humbled and an honest family disgraced, I will myself be the “some-

body" out of whom you say you will have it,' said Mark, hotly.

'Eh, what—pooh, pooh—you haven't *got* it,' said the attorney, incredulously; 'no—no, I mean to have justice. If I can't get the notes, the thief shall pay for them with his skin.'

'I have not the least objection to that, Mr. Garston, but I will take care that it is not Abel's skin, who is as honest a man as'—he was about to say 'yourself,' but in his indignation he thought that parallel insufficient—so ended with 'as Kit yonder.'

'Upon my word,' said Kit, thus indirectly appealed to, 'I think you are going much too fast, father.'

'That is what you have been doing, sir, these last three years,' returned the attorney, epigrammatically. 'But that is not my way. Do you suppose I don't know my own business?

Here's one of my own notes found in the purse of my groom's sister, and admitted to have been given to her by the man himself. However, I am wasting words, and Mr. Penryn, who is the nearest magistrate, will soon settle that matter.'

'Good Heavens, Mr. Garston, you don't think of taking out a warrant, surely?' exclaimed Mark, with agitation.

'Don't I? In four-and-twenty hours I'll have that scoundrel in jail;' and with that the attorney marched out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

The next moment, and while Mark still stood in shocked amazement staring at his friend, he heard the attorney calling 'Abel! Abel!' (as though he was the most faithful of retainers) 'saddle the mare.'

'But Mr. Penryn will have to grant the warrant, Kit?'

‘Upon the Governor’s word? Not if I know him. He must have a sworn information, and there must be a journey to the Knoll for that.’

‘Will my poor mother have to give it him?’

‘Perhaps. But not in a hurry, you may be certain. Moreover, she may find arguments of her own to move the prosecutor. Wait and see how things turn out. And in the meantime let us have a word with Abel.’

But on going into the stable-yard they found it vacant. The attorney, not without several ejaculations, which before a justice of the peace would have cost him five shillings apiece, had had to saddle the mare himself. Abel Deeds, who from his silence and alacrity Kit had christened ‘Deeds not words,’ had justified his title. He had taken himself off.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## KIT HAS A BAD QUARTER OF AN HOUR.

THE telephone is, no doubt, a modern institution, but in country districts something of the kind (or else it's magic) has been in vogue for centuries. Local news (for an event like the Battle of Waterloo or other world-cataclysm often escapes notice) flies like wild-fire, and (from decomposition or other cause which prevents its keeping) especially bad news. Unlike telegraphic communications, however, instead of the tidings being confined to the sender and receiver, it oozes out in the course of transit; the rushes murmur it, the fir trees

whisper it; and every one knows that the parson has kissed the Squire's wife before (like the wicked woman in the Scriptures) she has wiped her lips as if nothing had happened. The messenger whom Rachel Deeds had despatched to the Grey House for her son (which was the cause of his absence) might have been another Malise, and borne the Fiery Cross, or been 'Rumour full of tongues,' in so far as dissemination of his tidings was concerned; and such tidings! It is here that the local telephone outvies all the inventions of science; it has a perfervid imagination, and, as was observed of Mr. Oliver Goldsmith, 'improves whatever it touches.' It is for only a very few yards that the echo of the parson's kiss is 'heard; but beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the Rectory, or wherever it happened, it expands into a divorce case; and

before the bounds of the parish are reached, the guilty pair have fled the country.

As Mark and Kit walked down together, through the town, they were stared at—especially Kit—as though they had risen from the dead. It was not true then, said the gossips one to another, that Abel Deeds had murdered *everybody* at the Grey House, but only the old man. However, even that was something, ‘though Master Christopher did seem to take it most uncommon cool.’

And ‘if Mr. Garston was really dead, what a thing it would be for Mr. Tennant,’ who was the other Mogadion attorney.

Unconscious of the disappointment they thus inflicted on the public mind, the two young men repaired to the Dovecote. Kit himself had proposed it, and Mark was delighted at the suggestion, since the presence of

his friend, under such circumstances, beneath the Doctor's roof, would show that Kit for his part had no suspicion of Abel. Mark knew that he had none, but he was solicitous that Frank and the rest should be convinced that Mr. Garston and Mr. Garston's son were not at one in this matter.

Quick as Kit had been in taking this step, it seemed, to judge by the Doctor's face, who received them at his own door, that he had been none too soon in doing so.

'Before crossing my threshold, Mr. Christopher,' he said gravely, 'I must put the same question that was addressed to young Lochinvar: "Do you come here for peace or for war?"'

'For peace, Dr. Meade, I do assure you,' was the young man's earnest reply; 'I am as convinced there has been some unfortunate

mistake about Abel Deeds in this matter as you yourself can be.'

'As to the "unfortunate mistake,"' returned the Doctor, grimly, 'I will only say at present, that when this poor fellow's innocence shall have been established, the misfortune, as well as the mistake, will be Mr. Garston's. The reputation of honest folks is not to be taken away with impunity because other folks mislay their money.'

The antithesis between 'honest folks' and 'other folks' was only too obvious, but Christopher Garston passed it over with a smile.

'I am afraid it is true, sir, that my father has lost his temper, as well as his money, but that is no reason why we should follow his example. For the moment he is a good deal put out—for two hundred pounds is a large

sum to miss from one's desk—but I am not aware that he has done anything actionable.'

'Actionable!' repeated the Doctor, scornfully. 'I am not speaking of the law, but of common justice and good feeling.'

'I beg your pardon. I thought you were hinting, when you said "with impunity," at an action for libel.'

'Tut, tut,' said the Doctor, growing very red; 'I don't bark till I can bite, I do assure you. Well, Frank, how is she?'

'Oh, she's all right for the present,' said Frank, who now entered the room. 'You have done our poor Rachael a bad turn this morning, Garston.'

He did not offer his hand to Kit, but regarded him with cold disfavour.

'Upon my word,' cried Mark, 'you are

both treating Kit exceedingly ill. He is not responsible for his father's action in any way, and regrets it as much as you do.'

'A great deal more,' put in Kit, quietly; 'inasmuch as I am to blame in the matter. I did remind Trenna of the purse with Lucy's savings in it, because I knew my father would sooner or later come to hear of it; and I wished Abel to be exonerated at once. Unfortunately, as I understand, one of the missing notes has been found in it. No doubt that fact can be explained; but, in the meantime, is it altogether unreasonable that my father should wish to make some inquiry as to how it came there? He has gone to the Knoll to do it, and that—so far as I am aware—is the extent of his offence up to this date.'

The young man's tone and manner were the perfection of quiet remonstrance, while his

logic was incontrovertible. The Doctor looked at his son with some dismay.

‘Upon my word, Frank,’ the look seemed to say, ‘I am afraid I have been going a little too far.’

‘If you had seen our poor Rachel, Garston, as I have seen her,’ observed Frank stiffly and with a manner that spoke of enforced apology, ‘you would make allowance for any warmth my father may have exhibited.’

‘Pray don’t speak of that,’ said Kit. ‘His indignation, to my mind, only did him honour. At the same time, you must allow that the circumstances are such as to excuse some suspicion. The notes are certainly missing——’

‘Missing, they may be, Mr. Christopher Garston; but them as can hide can find.’

At the door of the parlour, which was open, stood Rachel Deeds. Her face was

white with rage, white even by contrast with her white hair, which, instead of its ordinary neatness, hung over it ragged and dishevelled.

‘My good Rachel,’ said Kit, with one of his pleasant smiles, ‘you can’t suppose my father is a magpie.’

His raillery was ill-timed but not ill-placed, if, indeed, his object was to stem the tide of the old woman’s indignation. The lower orders in the south have little or no humour, and the introduction of it in serious matters is unintelligible to them. She stood staring at him fiercely, but with a dazed expression, which changed into one of trust and affection as she turned to her young master. ‘Mr. Frank,’ she said, ‘you tell him what we think; this gentleman is too clever for a poor old woman, as he has proved himself to be for many a young one.’

If Christopher Garston had been in doubt of his being on hostile soil, this speech would have opened his eyes very effectually. It was one of those unfortunate utterances—such as children often use to our embarrassment and dismay—which betray whole volumes which ought to be under lock and key.

‘If “Mr. Frank” will tell you how this matter really stands,’ said Kit, with the red in his cheek and scorn in his tone, ‘instead of favouring me with his or your opinion upon me or mine, he will be doing you a service.’

Thus appealed to, and without taking notice of an accusation which he would perhaps have had some difficulty in explaining away, Frank stated the facts exactly as they had occurred. ‘It is but fair to say, Rachel,’ he added with an effort that evidently cost him something, ‘that Mr. Christopher Garston has

expressed his regret that any suspicion should have fallen upon your son, whom he believes to be wholly blameless in this matter.'

'Believes? You need not tell me that,' exclaimed the old woman bitterly; 'and his father knows it too. Folks needn't be honest people themselves to know when other people is honest. Abel—come here, Abel.'

Abel appeared, flushed and downcast, the very picture of guilt to the eyes that only use the borrowed glasses of convention and routine. His broad good-natured face was bedewed with apprehension of he knew not what, like an ox at the first sight of the pole-axe

'Abel, speak out, and for thy mother's sake tell how you came by that note as was found in Lucy's purse; my son ain't clever like some folks,' added Rachel with a glance at Christopher, 'but he's pure.'

And indeed if 'pure' means 'simple,' with which word it is often conjoined, Abel was a very lily of the valley.

'Master gave it me hisself,' said Abel. 'It was a part of my quarter's wages, and the best on it too, I promise you.'

'Then the whole affair lies in a nutshell,' observed Mark cheerfully. 'Mr. Garston being a man of business takes the numbers of his notes and——'

There he stopped, perceiving that his remark had been an unfortunate one. For the moment he had forgotten that the lost note had been identified, and that it might be the object of the defence to show that Mr. Garston had not made a memorandum of the number at the time he received it, but had trusted to his memory, which had failed him.

'There was ten shillings in silver besides,'

continued Abel by way of final contribution to the investigation, 'and I gave five on it to Jennie to buy a parasol with.'

'And a fool's trick too, my lad,' observed his mother reprovingly, 'for she spoilt it the next day by putting it up in the downpour, drat her. But then, gentlemen, Abel can never refuse Jennie naught, who is a sensible girl at bottom for all her wanting to be in the fashion; and you mustn't think him wasteful. He's a good son and a good brother and a good man, let them as knows nothing of goodness' (and again she cast a glance of defiance at Christopher) 'tell what lies they will of him.'

Kit answered only by a good-natured smile, which, though it failed to mollify his assailant, convinced the spectators at least of his forbearance and kindly feeling. The lily indeed

was so touched by it that he observed, ‘I have nowt to say against Mr. Christopher, mother, nor against Miss Trenna neither; and I don’t believe they hangs by master in this business a bit more than they does in any other.’

This frank expression of the result of Abel’s experience of the state of domestic affairs at the Grey House was received in silence; the Doctor and his son looked embarrassed as having been in some sort the inviters of so much plain speaking; Kit smiled but bit his lip, and Mark was downright angry at the scant courtesy with which, as he conceived, his friend had been treated throughout the interview.

‘It appears to me,’ he said, ‘that whatever wrong Mr. Garston may have done an innocent man in thought—for at present it has gone no further—others have committed

the same error. It would really seem that we lived in the old barbarous days, when the members of a man's family were all held answerable for his personal misdoings.'

'The accused himself has stood up for me, however,' said Kit smiling.

'A lesson to us all,' said Mark, with significance; 'I honour him for it, and shall certainly not be less resolved in consequence to see him righted; but in my opinion he is not the only one who needs to make apology.'

'My dear Mark,' said Frank with earnestness, 'it is impossible to affect to misunderstand your meaning, but if you suppose for a moment that we hold Christopher responsible for Mr. Garston's suspicions——'

'Why don't you call him Kit then as you used to do?' broke in Mark impatiently. 'I

don't blame Rachel, no one could blame a mother.'

'Hush, hush,' said the Doctor, rising with dignity. 'There is no need for more, Mark; Kit, give me your hand. We are partisans here, I admit it; but we want no quarrel with our neighbours; like ourselves I am persuaded that all you wish is to see justice done.'

'Christopher, Christopher,' cried an angry voice without, 'come here, I want you.'

Through the open window they saw the attorney, who had reined his mare in, at the garden gate; she was covered with foam, and her heaving sides showed the mark of his spurs.

'What is the matter now, I wonder?' exclaimed Kit, as he took up his hat with the weary air of a man forced into action against his will; 'stay here, Mark, till I let you know what has happened.'

But Mark had already followed him bare-headed into the garden.

‘Not you, not *you*,’ cried the attorney as he caught sight of him: ‘I want my son Christopher, and no one else.’

Upon a hint so very plain Mark had no alternative of course but to act; so he returned into the house while Kit stood by his father’s stirrup listening to the story, which, with many an impassioned expletive and gesture, the old man poured into his ear.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE MAGISTRATE.

WHY Mr. Garston should have had his say out immediately under the Dovecote windows can only be accounted for by his being so choke full of it that to carry it any further without spilling it was an impossibility. Otherwise he might just as well have pulled up a few yards further on, and not have exposed himself so directly to the enemy's fire. For, though Rachel and her son had withdrawn, and the ægis of Mark's friendship protected Kit from the animadversions of the rest, the spectacle of the swarthy attorney breathing forth fire and

fury (as was evident) into his son's ear was a temptation to them to express their views of him.

‘Upon my life,’ observed the Doctor, ‘I believe the man has found out his mistake already, and is pitching into Christopher as a relief to his feelings.’

‘He hasn’t found his money,’ put in Frank, drily, ‘or he would not be in such a passion.’

‘If he was as careful of himself as of his coin, he wouldn’t do it,’ observed the Doctor. ‘A man of his habit of body, and especially in this hot weather, should not allow himself such violent delights.’

‘Poor Kit,’ sighed Mark, compassionately ; ‘what a thing it must be to have such a father! I wonder what has happened up at the Knoll. Perhaps my mother and Maud together may have persuaded him to acquit his

first victim, and now with redoubled energy he is casting about for another.'

'He does not give me the impression,' observed Frank, critically, 'of having been subjected recently to female influence.'

'Come, his eloquence is exhausted at last,' cried Mark, who was standing with the others at the window, watching the colloquy between father and son. 'Now Kit will come back and tell us all about it.'

'Not he,' said the Doctor, I am afraid with some touch of malicious satisfaction: 'he is walking away, by the old gentleman's side, like a captive tied to the saddle bow. It's a case of needs must.'

'Where the Devil rides,' added Frank, grimly; 'I wonder where on earth they're going to? They have taken the turning to the Rectory.'

Mark uttered a deep sigh, for he guessed their errand, which the others did not. And he guessed right.

The attorney and his son moved on in silence; the latter had made his protest in reply to the declaration of the other's intentions, and it had been swept away by a whirlwind of wrath. The story that he had told to him will be related presently. Even though Mr. Garston had eased his mind of its load of indignation, there were still some dregs in the phial; some droppings after the thunder storm. 'I will have this sifted to the bottom,' he muttered fiercely, 'though it should cost me my fortune.'

Christopher Garston shrugged his shoulders. 'You used to tell me, father, that there was nothing so foolish as to throw good money after bad.'

‘What do you mean, sir?’ exclaimed the attorney, stopping his horse, and facing round upon the speaker. ‘Why should the money be bad — by which I suppose you mean lost irrevocably? You don’t suppose the fellow could have made away with it in a week. Every one is not a spendthrift like yourself.’

‘I am sorry I put in a word, sir,’ was the young man’s reply, which, if tone has any significance, implied that argument is thrown away in the case of a gentleman who has lost his temper; ‘what I meant was that even supposing that Abel is guilty——’

‘Supposing! Who supposes it? It is certain.’

‘Very good; even so, he has powerful friends. You know the law better than I do, but that circumstance has some weight, I

believe. Moreover, Mark offered to pay the money.'

'Hush it up!' exclaimed the attorney, slapping his sturdy thigh, 'I will see them d—d first. But I am glad you reminded me of Mark's offer. That's a point.'

'It was in reply to your remark that you would get the money out of somebody,' observed Kit, with a look that seemed to say, 'and that is a point on the other side.'

'He's taken himself off already, but I'll have him before night,' pursued the attorney vindictively. 'I have given notice at the station, and they have telegraphed down the line.'

'That was a little precipitate, I think.'

'Do you?' replied the other, in a voice like the snap of a clasp knife.

'Considering, I mean,' continued the

young man coolly, 'that Abel is at the present moment at the Dovecote with his mother and sister.'

'So much the better: I shall know where to lay my hands upon him. He's getting up his case, no doubt; backing it with a perjury or two from the women. They will have to swear pretty hard to swear away the number off a five-pound note.

They had by this time reached the Rectory gate, which lay back on its hinges in the usual hospitable fashion; on the lawn within stood the Rector himself, who, attracted by the sound of hoofs, was looking with curiosity towards them, shading his eyes from the sun, from which his close-fitting scull cap offered no protection, by means of an open book.

'Halloo! What's this, Mr. Garston? The

idea of you and your son reviving the old system of ride and tie. The objection to it, in these days, is that when the rider leaves his horse there is a possibility of some one else walking off with it, instead of the proper person.'

'You may say that, sir,' said the attorney with energy. 'In these days you have to hold your hat on with both hands to keep it for your own, and then you get your pockets picked.'

As Mr. Garston thus epitomised the morality of the day he threw himself off his steed.

'If you will be good enough to let your man give my mare a feed of corn, I shall be obliged to you, Mr. Penryn, for she has more work before her, and it will save time.'

'Certainly, by all means,' said the Rector,

wondering in his mind why the attorney came to the Rectory for corn when his own stalls were not a mile away; 'Jem, take Mr. Garston's horse and feed him. Will you take anything yourself?' he continued; 'we have refreshments for man and beast: you are old enough to remember the old formula.'

'I am come here on a matter of business,' said the attorney in a tone of some severity; the lightness of the Rector's tone, under which he always fancied lay some contempt for himself, jarred upon him under the present circumstances even more than usual.

'Very good,' returned the other, in total ignorance, of course, of his visitor's mission, and resenting his manner; 'there is no occasion to be so very serious even if you have. Business is not thunder, nor men milk, that we should all turn sour at the sound of it.'

To this conceit the attorney answered nothing ; if a devout wish that he had a bill of sale upon the Rector's furniture in his pocket, and had been empowered to put in the broker's man, flashed across his mind, he dismissed it instantly ; he felt that he had already made a false start, and must direct all his energies to the uncongenial task of conciliation.

‘I hate to trouble men of letters, Mr. Penryn, with any mere common sense—I mean commonplace—matter, which is necessarily out of their line. If there had been any other magistrate——’

‘Pray make no apologies, Mr. Garston,’ interrupted the other, ‘of course I am at the disposal of justice, though I am very sorry she wants me. Nothing has gone wrong among our Mogadion people, I do hope?’

‘Merely a theft of two hundred pounds.’

‘ Good Heavens! On whom and by whom?’

‘ On me, by my servant, Abel Deeds. He took the money out of my desk.’

‘ Unless you saw him do it with your own eyes, Mr. Garston,’ observed the Rector gravely, ‘ I shall be hard to persuade of that.’

‘ A magistrate is not a juryman, Mr. Penryn,’ replied the other curtly; ‘ but, as it happens, it is not a case of credibility at all, but one of proof, as you shall hear.’

And in a few words he told him the facts with which we are acquainted.

The Rector’s face grew grave and sad.

‘ You have seen this missing note yourself, have you, Mr. Garston?’

‘ No, I have not, but Mrs. Medway has, and Miss Maud and my daughter have.’

‘ Then one of them should be here. I can-

not issue a warrant upon hearsay—upon any mere unsupported assertion. Why did you not bring your daughter with you?’

‘Trenna was not in the house when I called at the Knoll,’ returned the attorney with suppressed passion, ‘they had got her out of the way on purpose. And neither Mrs. Medway nor her daughter would afford me any information. It is a conspiracy, nothing less, to defeat the ends of justice.’

‘I will not permit you to apply such words as those to any friend of mine,’ said the Rector sharply.

His face, however, exhibited dismay as well as indignation; it was not, he felt, impossible that, in her zeal for Abel and her mistrust of his accuser, Mrs. Medway might have allowed herself to indulge in a little obstruction.

‘I am come here for a warrant against Abel

Deeds, who has robbed me of a large sum of money. He has already fled from my service. If you refuse on my personal application to grant a warrant against him, and he escapes from justice, you will be held responsible. You know the law, sir.'

Now this, as the attorney rightly conceived, was one of the few things which the Rector, although a magistrate, did not know. It was the first time—so honest was the community among which he lived—that he had ever been applied to upon any matter of the sort, and though he had punctually attended to his duties at petty sessions, they had in no way enlightened him as to the present proceeding.

'It seems to me incredible,' he hesitated, 'from what I know of Mrs. Medway, that she should fail in any duty, public or private. Upon what ground did she refuse to let you see the note?'

‘Upon no ground whatever. I was met with a flat denial.’

The Rector bit his lips and looked about him indecisively; his eyes fell on Christopher, who, behind his father’s portly form, nodded encouragement.

‘Were you present, Mr. Christopher?’

‘No, sir, but my father told me all about it.’

‘Well, what did he say as to Mrs. Medway’s refusal to show him the note—pardon me, Mr. Garston’—for the attorney was about to speak—‘but I am, officially, the master here. I wish to hear what your son has to say.’

‘My father said that Mrs. Medway had declined to take any step in the matter—even so much as to show him the note—without advice from either yourself or Dr. Meade.’

‘Just so; that comes to the same thing,’ observed the attorney indifferently.

‘Not exactly, Mr. Garston. If you had quoted Mrs. Medway’s words I should have known how to act ; and since your mare looks tired I shall be happy to offer you a seat in my pony chaise. If you like to accompany us to the Knoll, Christopher, there is room for you also.’

The Rector was not wont to be so gracious to the young man, whom of late years indeed he had rarely addressed without the preface of ‘Mr.,’ but his frank conduct on this occasion had pleased him ; and perhaps he was not unwilling to have a third party, even if it were Mr. Garston’s son, to avert a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Garston.

The proposition was by no means received with rapture by Kit himself ; he expressed his thanks as the attorney did, but looked at the proffered vehicle when it came round in a way

that the proverb teaches us we should *not* look at a gift horse, and by inference a lent chaise ; while so far from ‘jumping at it,’ he climbed on to the perch behind (leaving the front seat to his elders) with the inertia and deprecation of a moulting bird. It was evident in fact that Mr. Christopher was in two minds, as the phrase goes, whether he would go at all.

The journey was not much enhanced by conversation, and indeed each of the three persons had subject for thought enough fully to employ him : Mr. Penryn was thinking of poor Abel, as to whom his magisterial mind could not but acknowledge things looked black ; Mr. Garston, of his two hundred pounds deficit ; while Kit, to judge by the extreme seriousness and even anxiety of his expression, would have been pronounced, by his enemies at least, to have been thinking of his own affairs.

## CHAPTER XV.

## FOILED.

ON ordinary occasions when the Rector paid a visit to the Knoll, the old servant, Michael, received him with respectful inquiries after his honour's health, and immediately ushered him into the presence of his mistress or her daughter, whether they were in the house or garden ; when 'My dear Mr. Penryn, how glad we are to see you,' was his unfailing welcome. But to-day, though Michael paid him all due reverence, his companionship with the attorney seemed to stiffen the old man into stone. 'He would see,' he said, in answer to the usual

inquiries, but he did not know whether his mistress was at home ; and when this assurance had been given, he ushered the party into the empty drawing-room with the sort of ceremony used by Mr. Crossbones the undertaker in Mogadion when, at some great country obsequies, he would murmur, ‘ Your hat, if you please, Mr. Penryn,’ previously to encircling it with a weeper.

The room was as pretty as ever ; the fountain in the conservatory on which it opened ‘ kept the ball alive ’ as usual on the top of its ever-falling column ; the birds in the little aviary had not lost a note, but to two at least of the party the room wore an air quite different from that to which they had been accustomed. And when Mrs. Medway came sailing in with unwonted dignity, and a certain umbrage in her manner, like that of a

ruffled swan, matters looked more strangely still.

‘I am glad you are come, Mr. Penryn,’ she said gravely, as she took the Rector’s hand, ‘and am not sorry you brought Mr. Garston with you; as for Kit, he is always welcome here.’

It was clear that the speaker thought a rupture with the attorney was inevitable—nay, even deemed that it had already occurred—and was taking an early opportunity of announcing that the offence of the father was not to be visited upon his children; but her speech, though intended to be so far conciliatory, as it turned out was unfortunate. It gave an opportunity to the attorney to observe afterwards that ‘the woman’ showed from the first that she had no expectation of his speaking to her again.

‘I conclude,’ continued Mrs. Medway, addressing the Rector, ‘that Mr. Garston has acquainted you with the unhappy circumstances which caused him to pay us a visit this morning. He came here for the note which he alleges to have been stolen from him by our Lucy’s brother—a man you have known, Mr. Penryn, from a child, and whose family you know to be as honest as any in Mogadion. I declined, for Abel’s sake, I own, to show him that note, except under advice from those in whom I had confidence. I am sorry that my refusal should have offended him, but beyond that, in the way of apology, I cannot go.’

‘You have forgotten to mention that you put my daughter—my own daughter—out of the way, Madam,’ observed Mr. Garston, in a voice trembling with passion, ‘so that I was unable to obtain information from any source.’

‘Put her out of the way?’ repeated the Rector, smiling. ‘Come, come, Mr. Garston, Mrs. Medway did not surely take such strong measures as all that. The young lady is alive and well, even if in captivity, I have no doubt. She merely happened to go out for a walk just as your horse’s hoofs announced your coming.’

Mrs. Medway nodded corroboratively, but with all the gravity of a mandarin.

‘Well, well, that is not worse,’ pursued the Rector, ‘than things I have known to take place when I have been on the Bench. A witness acting on the suggestion even of his legal adviser does sometimes take a walk at a time which is inconvenient for the prosecution. Nevertheless, I candidly confess that Mrs. Medway should have shown you the note. However, we

can see it now—it's just where it was, I suppose?'

'But the thief himself may not be where he was,' observed the attorney acidly.

'Abel Deeds was at the Dovecote less than an hour ago,' remarked Christopher, quietly.

'At the Dovecote? Why, I understood you to say, Mr. Garston, that he had run away,' exclaimed the Rector, indignantly.

'I said he had run away from my service,' answered the attorney, sullenly. 'It is not my business to ask where he is gone at present. I am not one to bark till I can bite.'

If Mr. Garston had really been, as his favourite metaphor suggested, of the canine race, and an inferior specimen of it, Mrs. Medway could scarcely have regarded him with more disdain.

'I suppose, Mr. Penryn, you wish to see

this note?' she said, ignoring the attorney altogether.

'Well, yes, if you will be so good,' returned the Rector, with an air, it must be confessed, not very suitable to a judicial investigation. One would have thought that he had been asked to look at some specimen of Druidical remains, the genuineness of which he doubted, but in which, out of regard for their possessor, he was compelled to feign an interest.

His hostess led the way to the boudoir, and pointed to the drawer which was the repository of Lucy's little treasure. 'Here is the key,' she said, producing it, 'and that is all, thank Heaven,' she added with significance, 'that I have to do with the matter.'

'I hope nobody else has had to do with it; I mean has had the opportunity of meddling with the note,' observed the attorney.

‘The key has not left my possession, sir,’ answered Mrs. Medway, haughtily, ‘since the drawer was opened in your daughter’s presence.’

Mr. Penryn took the key and took out the purse. ‘There is the note. Mr. Garston, it is for you to identify it.’

The attorney took a seat, spread out the note deliberately before him on the table, and said, ‘Ah, that will do.’

The tone in which he spoke was triumphant ; and a licking of the lips which accompanied the words reminded his hearers of certain tenants of the Zoological Gardens.

‘You have a memorandum of the number of the missing note, I conclude,’ observed the Rector.

‘I have,’ said the attorney, and he produced a slip the duplicate of which Trena had

brought with her. 'Here we have it, 28828. —Eh! What! Why, there's something wrong here. This note is 28882.'

'That is clear enough,' said the Rector.

'There is something else clear enough,' answered the attorney, speaking through his teeth, and turning to that very unpleasant colour which the shopman who has no white gloves assures you looks the same as white. 'I warn you, Mrs. Medway, I am not a man to be trifled with.'

'What the deuce do you mean, sir?' exclaimed the Rector, indignantly. 'If you think because I am a clergyman that you can insult a lady in my presence, you make a great mistake.'

'I beg you will let Mr. Garston have his say,' said Mrs. Medway, with calm contempt.

'You will find it is not only "say," but

“do,” ma’am,’ continued the attorney, with vehemence; ‘there is a conspiracy here; this is not the note my daughter saw.’

‘It *is* the note, sir,’ insisted Mrs. Medway, ‘the very same. I locked the drawer with my own hands. I have not the memorandum here; but my daughter, Maud, has got it. Maud, Maud’! she cried, opening the door, ‘come here, and bring Trenna with you.’

As they were in the next room awaiting events, there was no delay in the production of the two young ladies.

Maud, indeed, had proposed to bear her mother company in this second reception of her unwelcome guest, which, it was evident, would be an unpleasant ordeal, but Mrs. Medway had declined her offer. ‘It is much better,’ she said, ‘that you should not be

mixed up in the matter if it can be avoided, my dear.' It now appeared, however, that Maud was to be mixed up in it. The sudden summons had made her heart 'go,' but had not deprived her of her courage, and of at least the external appearance of calmness. Trenna, on the other hand, was very pale and tremulous. She fixed her eyes upon her father from the first, and never withdrew them, save when directed to do so, throughout the painful interview that followed. Not a single salutation was exchanged on either side. The expression on Mr. Garston's face too clearly expressed 'business' to admit of that. 'Maud, my dear,' said Mrs. Medway, gently, 'where is the memorandum you took of Lucy's note?'

With steady hand Maud produced her card-case. 'Here it is, mamma. I wrote it,

as you know, in Trenna's presence on the back of this card.'

'One moment,' interrupted the attorney :  
'do you remember the number?'

'I think so ; but I decline to state it from recollection. It had, however, three eights and two twos in it, because mamma called our attention to that fact.'

'She did, did she?' said the attorney, with a sneer. 'That was a very convenient coincidence. What do you say, Trenna?'

'The number was 28882, papa.'

'There!' said Mrs. Medway, triumphantly.

'Oh, yes! I see it is written on the card plainly enough,' continued the attorney.  
'She has, no doubt, had every opportunity while under this roof of refreshing her memory.'

'Indeed, papa, I have never looked at the

card since,' returned Trenna, simply. 'It made me miserable enough to think of it.'

'Then you are quite sure that the number on the note corresponded with that upon the slip?'

'Oh, yes! I am afraid, at least, that there can be no mistake upon that point. Here is the slip with the number of lost notes, and here is the number with the cross which I put against it, 28828.'

'But the number of Lucy's note is 28882,' said Mrs. Medway. 'It is very curious!'

'V—ery,' interposed the attorney, sardonically. 'One would almost think there was magic in it.'

'I didn't look at the slip myself,' said Mrs. Medway, taking no notice of this sarcasm, and addressing herself to the Rector, 'both Maud and Trenna being so positive about the number

being there, and of course it was no pleasure for me to see it; but if a mistake has been made, I am sure it will be a cause of thankfulness to all of us.'

'People sometimes make mistakes for which they have cause to be anything but thankful,' observed the attorney, menacingly. 'There are mistakes, and there are misdemeanours.'

'No doubt,' put in the Rector, quietly. 'There are also misprisions of felony, and homicide by misadventure, and all sorts of misses, with which the matter in hand has nothing to do. It is clear to me now that the error has arisen through the coincidence in the numbers, which in both cases were composed of the same figures, though in different order.'

'That was it, no doubt,' said Mrs. Medway.

‘I remember calling the girls’ attention to there being three eights and two twos in it.’

‘Just so,’ said Mr. Penryn, with the smiling complacency of one who has solved a double acrostic, and is awaiting the congratulations of his fellow competitors: ‘the young ladies were flurried and frightened, and naturally took one number for the other. I am sure, when he comes to reflect upon the matter, that Mr. Garston himself will be as convinced of the fact as I am, and I hope I may add, as well pleased.’

To this sanguine speech the attorney only vouchsafed a contemptuous puff by way of reply. ‘Come here, Trenna,’ he said, ‘and look me in the face while you answer me’ (a quite unnecessary injunction, by-the-bye, for, as we have said, the young lady had hitherto looked nowhere else); ‘you are not such a

fool, I know, as to have mistaken one number for another; a figure in your eyes has as much significance as a letter. Now, tell me was that note you see lying there—No. 28828—the same that you saw taken out of Lucy Deeds' purse yonder?'

'I have not the least doubt in the world that it was, father,' returned the girl, with a white face, but in unflinching tones.

'You dare to tell me that, do you? Then you now assert that the number on the note did not correspond with the number on the slip, though this very morning you asserted the contrary?'

'I thought it did, father; I suppose, as Mr. Penryn says'—here her voice trembled for the first time—'that I was deceived by the coincidence of the figures.'

'You lie,' answered the attorney, sternly.

‘Come, come, Mr. Garston,’ put in the Rector, ‘that is not a word to be used before ladies.’

‘It is the truth,’ said the attorney, with quiet significance : ‘look at her.’

Pale as ashes, and trembling with suppressed emotion, Trenna gazed upon her father like a bird fascinated by a serpent.

‘And now,’ said he, ‘I should like a word or two with Miss Maud.’

‘Then you won’t have it,’ said the Rector, sharply. ‘Between yourself and your daughter I had no right to interfere ; but to Miss Medway, here, you shall not put an insulting question, or rather a question which, when she has replied to it, however truthfully, may suggest an insult.’

‘So you deny me the right of examination, do you, Mr. Penryn? You think it decent,

magistrate though you are, to take sides in this matter? Well, well, I will find means to make the young lady speak. There is justice to be got in other places if not in Mogadion ;' and with that Mr. Garston put his hat on—as if to show that he was not in a court of justice just at present—and marched out of the room.

'He'll have to walk, that's a comfort,' murmured the Rector, complacently ; 'if he takes my chaise I'll prosecute him for felony.'

'How shocking it all is !' exclaimed Mrs. Medway, throwing up her hands. 'I am so sorry for you, dear Trenna, and for you, Kit.'

'Oh, never mind us,' said Kit, cheerfully ; 'the governor's a little put out at having taken a shot at the wrong man, but he'll come round, won't he, Trenna?'

But Trenna had covered her face with her hands, and answered nothing.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## AN UNSELFISH ALLY.

WHATEVER was to be urged against Mr. Garston of Mogadion, it must be said of him that he was as good as his word—whenever he threatened anybody. In most cases his shrewd eye to the main chance kept his temper under control, but there were occasions when the Spanish blood in his veins got the mastery of him, and impelled him to do things that were not remunerative. His prosecution—most people called it his persecution—of Abel Deeds was a case in point. That he had strong suspicions to go upon in the first instance it

must be admitted, but they were not proofs, and when he attempted to collect evidence we have seen that it eluded him. In his own mind, it is true, he was well convinced that the Medway family (probably in collusion with his own daughter) were in a conspiracy to shield his offending servant. But that was no excuse—as a lawyer—for his going straight away from the Knoll to Mr. Trelawney, the nearest magistrate, and obtaining from him, on his own sworn information, a warrant against Abel Deeds.

The immediate consequence of this was the appearance at the Dovecote—more phenomenal than that of a blue-bottle fly at Christmas—of a policeman. It was a visit of a very different nature from that of one of the Metropolitan brigade with his starched manner, his ‘shibboleth’ of ‘wanted,’ and that incon-

trovertible logic in his pocket which closes with a snap; for it was simply Bob Ellis, whom Dr. Meade had brought into the world and vaccinated, a *protégé* of old Rachael, and a personal friend and former playmate of the accused himself. Nothing could be more apologetic than his manner (for indeed his presence under the Doctor's roof on such an errand seemed to him little less than sacrilege), or accommodating than his behaviour. 'Business was business,' he said in a tone which quite corroborated the Rector's view of that occupation, 'but he know'd his place as well as his duty'—which I am afraid was a euphemism for offering if desirable to keep the strictest watch at the front door, while Abel made his escape through the back garden.

On the other hand Bob's visit, since it was known to all Mogadion, was more detrimental

to Abel's character than if he had been wanted by the whole Metropolitan Brigade from A to Z.

'All the town will know he has been took up,' sobbed the unhappy Rachel. 'To think that it should ever be cast up against a son of mine that he was a jail-bird!'

'That it never shall be,' said the Doctor stoutly: 'I'll take Abel over with me to Mr. Trelawney, and be bail for him myself'—which accordingly he did. Whereby Mr. Garston's threat that the offender should pass that night in the Roundhouse—as the Mogadlion dungeon was called—failed of its accomplishment.

This, as we have said, was the immediate effect of the attorney's hasty action; but the more remote consequences were much more serious and extensive in their sphere of action. A feud arose between Mr. Garston and certain

of his neighbours, with whom we are acquainted, which was never healed. The cataclysms that rend asunder country friendships are often very small affairs. A game-law decision erring on the score of mercy at the petty sessions ; a speech at election time ; the question of whether a horse has three legs or four argued between buyer and seller ; a disinclination for afternoon church : any one of these may have the effect of a social earthquake and convulse a provincial community with anything but mirth.

The flag of discussion may be but of the size of a pocket handkerchief, but, once raised, and the spirit of partisanship evoked, the whole parish becomes a camp, and the very Vestry a battle-field.

Mogadion was a peaceful spot, but, as we have said, it had more than one attorney ; and

even while Dr. Meade was on his way to the magistrate, his son had walked down the street, and stopping at a small door with an immense brass plate—like a cuirass on a Middlesex militiaman—with ‘MR. TENNANT, SOLICITOR,’ engraved upon it, had instructed that gentleman to commence an action for slander upon Abel Deeds’ behalf, against Mr. Garston.

Under other circumstances, this proceeding would have troubled the rival attorney not a little; for, just as a parson is the most impatient of listeners to a homily from one of his own cloth, so the man of law exceedingly resents writ, summons, or notice, directed against his own learned person; but, for the present, Mr. Garston was too full of the sense of personal wrong to feel anything but wrath at this procedure, which only caused him to consult with

greater diligence the enactments against 'Conspiracy,' with the hope of carrying fire and sword into the household at the Knoll.

His first act was to send for Trenna, who had, of course, no choice but to obey his summons, and a very unpleasant quarter of an hour did that young lady pass under his cross-examination. She stuck, however, to her story, suggesting that the key of the mystery must needs lie in the coincidence of the figures, which, as being the Rector's own explanation of the matter, by no means rendered it more acceptable to her father. He reiterated the obnoxious word he had already applied to her, accused her of being a traitress and a renegade, and finished with the most violent maledictions against her late hostess and her daughter, whom he announced it to be his firm intention to place in the criminal dock.

To the invectives against herself Trenna answered nothing ; she sat with pale face and lips compressed, like one in the pillory to whom dead cats and cabbage stalks were no worse things than were to be expected ; only at times, when a stone struck her—when he called her ‘traitress,’ for example—she shivered a little, and murmured, ‘Not that, not that,’ beneath her breath. When he spoke of the Medways, however, she did essay to moderate the rancour of his tongue.

‘You are wrong, father, you are wrong,’ she pleaded ; ‘they are good, kind, honest people.’

‘Good, kind,’ he reiterated scornfully ; ‘yes, of course, it is easy to be good and kind when it costs one nothing ; and especially to forgive injuries which are committed against some one else. As for honest, they are not.

It is as bad to shield a thief as to *be* one, and that Mrs. Medway and her daughter, or *you*, have put another note in that purse instead of the stolen one is positively certain. I'll sift the matter, however, if it costs me my fortune, to the very bottom.'

'It may cost you more than that,' cried Trenna, desperately.

'More than my fortune! What do you mean, girl? To be sure I have no money to throw away, thanks to your spendthrift brother. But—' here he paused, and, attracted by some expression in her face, rose from his chair, with fear as well as fury in his eyes, and seized her wrist— 'what is it, Trenna? What do you mean, I say?'

'Nothing but what I said, father,' she answered quickly. 'What is fortune com-

pared with a good name? If you push this matter to extremity you will make enemies for us of everybody. And we are not so flush of friends.'

'Friends! I want no friends. I want my money, and I want revenge; and I will have them both.'

If any one who saw him at that moment, just when he said 'revenge,' had had a doubt of Mr. Garston's origin, it would have been set at rest. Relentless, swart, resentful, he looked every inch a Spaniard.

'Papa, when are the Assizes?' inquired Trenna, after a long pause.

'The Assizes? Ay, there will be something seen then in the newspapers, such as was never seen before. Among the "Fashionable Departures" you will read "From the Knoll, Mogadion, to Dartmoor Prison——"'

‘I asked *when* they would be, father,’ interrupted Trenna.

‘What is that to you? Next month.’

‘And in the meantime are we—that is, Kit and I—to be strangers to the Medways?’

‘No, why should you? Their quarrel is with me, and not with mine.’

This reply surprised the girl more than it pleased her. She knew her father too well to suppose the reason given for the continuance of her intimacy at the Knoll to be the true one, even had he not termed her ‘traitress;’ he wished, by permitting things to go on as usual, to lull suspicion. If he suffered her to come and go between the two houses as before, the Medways would never dream of his intentions. That her conjecture was correct she felt convinced, when the attorney added in gentler tones, ‘Nor do I wish to cut off your connec-

tion with the Dovecote folks. They harboured Abel Deeds, 'tis true, but while they thought him innocent it was at worst but an un-neighbourly act. He is in the Roundhouse now, and no more need be said about it.'

'In the Roundhouse!' cried Trenna, clasping her hands in horror.

'Yes; and will only leave it for the gaol, where he will have better company perhaps than he expected. All these things however are matters for a judge and jury, and in no way concern a young lady like yourself. You need make no change in your habits upon my account; and what I say in that respect—as you may tell him if you please—applies to your brother also.'

Here the attorney took down from their shelf a bundle of legal documents, bound together with red tape, and, having blown the

dust from them, proceeded to bury himself in their contents like a parchment worm, an action which Trenna rightly took to be an order of release.

On the gravel sweep outside, Kit was walking to and fro awaiting her.

‘Well, my poor Trenna,’ he said, embracing her affectionately, ‘you have borne the burden and heat of the day, but now I do hope it’s over.’

‘No, Kit, no,’ she answered sorrowfully. ‘Papa is resolved not only to get his rights but to punish Mrs. Medway.’

‘Tut, tut, this world is not the House of Commons that everything can be done by Resolution. In law he has not a leg to stand upon, either as regards our friends at the Knoll, or Abel. He will find all that out as soon as his temper cools, and drop the business.’

Trenna shook her head. 'I never saw him half so bad as this, Kit. And, what is worse than all, he tells me that he has just put poor Abel in prison. When he told me that I thought I should have died of shame.'

'What a tender heart you have, dear Trenna, as indeed I have good cause to know,' he said caressingly; 'as a matter of fact, however, Abel is no more in prison than you are. Dr. Meade has bailed him.'

'But he will have to go to prison after all.'

'Not he; he will just stay out on bail till the Assizes, and then the governor will withdraw from the prosecution. He will not throw good money after bad, you may depend on't.'

'Oh, Kit, do you really think that that will be the end of it all? How thankful we ought to be. Do you mean to say that being con-

vinced of Abel's guilt, but unable to prove it, papa will do nothing further?'

'Nothing. He has nothing to go upon but the note in Lucy's purse. If he had not been so infernally precipitate, the whole thing would now be over.'

'And what is it that is not over?'

'Well, Dr. Meade has instructed that fellow Tennant to commence an action for libel on behalf of Abel; the governor has laid himself open to it, no doubt; and the question is whether or no, if the thing comes on for trial, the whole affair will have to be gone into. The Doctor is not a man who can be ignored in any way.'

'This seems to me worse than all,' murmured Trena, despairingly.

'It is deuced bad, no doubt, and it must be stopped somehow. I suppose all communica-

tions will have to be suspended between our house and the Dovecote ; or rather they will have to be carried on under the rose.'

'No ; papa said he had no objection to you and me taking our own line, just as usual.'

Kit smiled sardonically. 'He thinks to catch a weasel asleep, does he ? Well, so much the better for us.'

'Frank will surely stand our friend,' said Trenna, earnestly. 'He knows our position so well.'

'That will make no difference, my dear Trenna, as regards his feud with the Governor. The Doctor and his son are a sentimental couple in their way, and will move Heaven and earth for Rachael's sake, to whitewash Abel. As for me I am no favourite of Frank's ; and any appeal from me would do as much harm as

good ; indeed, under the circumstance, Trenna,' he added significantly, ' more harm. And yet it is a *sine quâ non* that they should abandon these proceedings.'

' But if you can't persuade them, Kit ?'

' Then *you* must try. Of course, it will be disagreeable to you ; exceedingly disagreeable ; worse than anything you have gone through already, perhaps. I don't gloze it over to myself, I do assure you.'

' I will do whatever is necessary, Kit,' she answered quietly, ' and that lies within my power.'

' That is answered like yourself, my brave one,' he replied, with his hand upon her shoulder ; ' as to your power, it is resistless in that quarter. The one thing I like in that great solid stolid creature Frank is the admiration which you have excited in him. You have

only to say "don't," and—provided you have not forbidden him to bow before your shrine—he will obey you.'

'Frank Meade is an honest gentleman, Kit, and I don't like to hear you turn him into ridicule,' answered Trenna, coldly.

'I was only ridiculing his pretensions, my darling,' returned the other gently. 'It would be a little too much if that scientific stiff-necked pig should seriously aspire to my Trenna.'

'It would be a great deal too much,' she answered bitterly. 'Oh, Kit, Kit, with all your cleverness, and with all your loveableness, how I have wished, how I have prayed——'

'That must have been a long time ago,' interrupted Kit, laughing, 'when you had your eyes bandaged like a child at blind man's buff.'

‘Perhaps so,’ she answered sorrowfully; ‘but I was happier before you took off the handkerchief; and Frank and Mark are happier men than you.’

‘Doubtless; that is easily explained; they are richer men, and have more comfortable homes. Frank, indeed,’ he added after a pause, ‘will have no great fortune, nor will he ever make one. He is eminently a groundling; unfit for a high flight. I should be very, very sorry to see you throw yourself away upon Frank Meade, Trenna.’

‘You need not fear, Kit,’ she answered with a grave smile. ‘I am not free to marry. I have some one to look after—and who takes a great deal of looking after—whom I cannot forsake.’

‘You are a dear unselfish creature,’ he answered lovingly. ‘But that some one will

soon be out of leading strings, and in a position to repay you all he owes you. His debt is so enormous that I could hardly paint his prospects more brightly; yes, Trenna, I shall be a rich man, and soon. I have already rubbed shoulders with men who have made money rapidly, and in all that constitutes capacity of that sort have found myself their superior; I hold the key of one fortune already in my hand; and with that achieved—with that to begin with—like an Archimedes who has found his standpoint, I will roll the world to your feet.’ He spoke with the force and fervour, if not of an enthusiast, at least of a man who believes in himself.

‘But in the meantime, my dear Kit, there are the Assizes.’

‘That’s true,’ he answered ruefully; then tickled by the contrast of this commonplace

fact with the splendour of his day-dream he burst into a laugh. 'To get the Governor out of his difficulties must be the first step, and it rests with you, my faithful Trenna, to accomplish it.'

'I will do my best,' she sighed, 'at whatever cost.'

Of the latter sentence Christopher Garston took no note, though a fleeting frown betrayed that he had heard it; to the former he answered lightly, with a pat on her burning cheek, 'If you do half your best you will succeed, Trenna.'

## CHAPTER XVII.

## HART-LEAP HILL.

THE suggestion of Mr. Garston that his young people should mix with the Meades and Medways upon the old footing, as if nothing had happened to make him count them as enemies, met with no obstruction. The impression Kit had produced at the Dovecote on the morning of his last visit had been distinctly favourable to him; and though their opinion of his character remained perhaps much the same, both the Doctor and his son felt that, in the matter of the alleged robbery, they had done him wrong in placing him in the same

condemnation as his father. A word or two dropped by Trenna on this point even produced in Frank a feeling of remorse; and in his endeavour to express regret he had perhaps never shown himself more friendly to her brother than at this very time, when, acting on the Doctor's instructions, Mr. Tennant was sharpening his weapons for an onslaught upon the master of Grey House. Mr. Garston's remark, in short, that the whole affair was a matter for judge and jury, seemed to be accepted in its literal sense, and all parties concerned agreed to leave it exclusively to their decision.

At the Knoll, so far from suffering for the offence of their father, Christopher Garston and sister were received with even a warmer welcome than before. In the case of the former, in particular, it seemed that Mark

could not do enough to express his unabated affection and complete understanding of his friend's position. Good taste of course prevented his inveighing against Mr. Garston's obstinacy (to which they attributed the attorney's persistent belief in Abel's guilt in the face of facts), and a natural delicacy prevented his ever alluding to him. What he principally spoke of to Kit now, instead of discussing such matters as had previously formed the staple of their conversation, and some of which—antiquities and county history, for example—Kit was wont to throw himself into for his friend's sake rather than his own, was the coming term at Cambridge, for it had been quite decided that Mark was to return with Kit to college. He looked forward to it, of course, as most young men of spirit do, with pleasure; but what perhaps pleased him most

was the reflection that it would afford him a still more frequent and closer intimacy with Kit himself.

Never was the phrase 'there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother' more applicable than in Mark's case, and it would have been untrue and unfair to Kit to say that the attachment was not reciprocated. The difference lay not so much in the fact that the one had many other things to think of besides friendship, and the other very few, but that what occupied Kit's mind could not always be confided to his friend, nor indeed to any one else; whereas Mark bared his very soul to the eyes of Kit. Kit knew as well as Mark himself how the latter loved his mother and Maud; how he looked on Trenna as a second sister; with what affection he regarded Frank (for he showed this without a suspicion of the jealousy

it excited in the other's breast); and the high regard in which he held Mr. Penryn and the Doctor. Mark's world was very small—piteously small as some would think; in this he was almost like a child; but there was recompence in it, as Kit himself was well aware.

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity;

and the more one sees of Life, in its conventional sense, the more it is apt to stain our own humanity. Thanks to his somewhat exceptional circumstances, aided by good principles and a fine disposition, Mark Medway was *almost* stainless—a qualification, as I once heard a clergyman (and not an Irish one either) observe from the pulpit, to be made in the case of 'nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand, and *a still greater proportion* of men.'

It is but seldom that those whose regard for their own belongings is so strongly developed have much affection for outsiders, but in this respect Mark was an exception. His two friends were as dear to him as though they had been of his own blood, while one of them—Christopher Garston—was a friend, and something more. Except that both Mark and he were grown men, and each possessed of a mature and vigorous intelligence (albeit of a widely different kind), the attachment between them resembled that of a small boy and the ‘Cock of the School.’ Every one has witnessed some example of it, and not a few have experienced it. The love of Smith *minor* for Brown *major* is the idyll of scholastic life. Only by the time Smith had become Smith *major* himself, the illusion commonly vanishes, and when they both meet afterwards on the

boards of real life Brown as often as not plays an inferior part, and Smith wonders to himself how he could have ever taken such a mere 'super' for his hero. In Mark's eyes, on the contrary, Kit still kept his pre-eminence, and, so far as wit and genial grace could earn it, deserved it. In Lamartine's best poem ('The Buonaparte') he speculates, while admitting the failings of that 'Scourge of God,' whether genius itself may not be a virtue; and, when one considers from outside certain highly attractive personages of one's own acquaintance, one is almost tempted to agree with him. Poor Kit—so far as we know—had nothing of the Napoleon about him, but it must be confessed that he had won his way into Mark's affections without the aid of virtue; and there must have been something, one would think, besides

alloy in a magnet that had thus attracted a heart as true as steel.

Just now, when his own home was less agreeable to Christopher even than usual, and when his father—having schemes on hand of which his son could only express disapproval—showed no great desire for his presence, the two young men were thrown together a great deal.

On one occasion the young people—that is to say, Tenna, Maud, and Frank, as well as their two selves—organised a picnic to Polwith Point! Mrs. Medway was indisposed, and unable at the last minute to accompany them, but among such old friends a chaperone was not indispensable, so that they drove thither alone. The whole five were as merry as children at a school feast, and, having arrived at their destination, betook themselves to various diversions.

Frank, who had brought his geological hammer, chipped the rocks; he was one of those enviable persons who derive a satisfaction from recognising the ‘marks of an upheaval’ invisible to the unlearned eye, and ‘the action of fire’ where there is not so much as an ember.

Mark discoursed upon the probable use and intention of rocking-stones—of which there was a splendid specimen in the locality—and Kit provoked him by remarks on ‘the cradles of the human race,’ and other suggestions not wholly of a scientific kind. He ridiculed Pliny’s remarks upon rocking-stones: ‘Lay one finger on it and it will stir, but thrust it with your whole body and it will not move;’ and when Mark quoted Ptolemy Hephestion, ‘It can only be raised with the stalk of the asphodel,’ he profanely offered to effect a

similar miracle with his umbrella. Yet all the time Kit never angered Mark, but the contrary; such a winning way he had with him (where men liked him to begin with), and such a manner of disagreeing as was more agreeable than other men's assent.

The two girls having laid out the lunch upon the promontory, whence the wind very superfluously carried their salt into the sea, applied themselves, the one to sketching in water-colours, the other to Art criticism in rose. At their mid-day meal the little party reunited with the punctuality of clockwork. At picnics people are always punctual; the fresh air quickens their appetites, and there is a secret apprehension that there may be nothing left for a late comer. It is the absence of this wholesome fear, joined to natural selfishness and egotism, that makes folks late for ordinary

dinner parties. It is at once the easiest way of showing themselves fashionable and attracting attention to the fact; and then the wretches have had afternoon tea and are not hungry.

To persons of middle age and mature intelligence a meal in the open air is a serious mistake. The absence of chairs, though the Romans put up with it, is a serious inconvenience to the stout-made Briton; but in youth he can eat anyhow.

That picnic on Polwith Point, with the blue sea hundreds of feet beneath them, the stately ships passing on their noiseless way so close, as it seemed, in the clear air, that one could toss a biscuit on to their decks, and with the sea-gulls wheeling and whining above their heads, was something to be remembered. How little we think, amid such scenes and company, that the day's glad doings are being impressed

on the retina of the mind, to be reproduced perhaps to our misery, that a time may come when, through cruel contrast, every present pleasure shall inflict a pang, and Joy, mixed with vain Regret, become Despair!

As exercise had been recommended by the faculty for Mark (who, being a wise as well as a learned man, detested it), it had been secretly arranged between his mother and Kit that the latter should return home with him on foot. The plot was easier to carry out than most conspiracies, for Kit had only to express a determination to walk home alone to secure Mark, though not, it is true, without protest. So Frank, nothing unwilling, was left in charge of the young ladies and the waggonette.

The vehicle, with two strong horses, had come from the livery stables at Mogadion, for Mrs. Medway—and small blame to her—did

not approve of her pet ponies being taken to Polwith. The road was a rough one even in summer, lying partly over the breezy moor, partly among those deep-sunk Cornish lanes which bring home to one the practicability of the flying leap taken by Commodore Trunnion over the head of the waggoner.

‘Oh, Frank,’ cried Trena, as they bowled along the moor, ‘let us go back by Hart-Leap Hill’ (she had been in better spirits throughout the day than usual, and made her appeal with heightened colour and sparkling eyes); ‘the view from the top this evening will be so glorious.’

‘The view?’ hesitated Frank, turning round in remonstrance, and not displeased that there was need of it; it was pleasant to him to have the excuse of arguing with the earnest beauty. ‘But think of the road! It is almost

as steep as the side of a house, and, what is worse, as narrow as the gutter. Gin a body meet a body——’

‘For shame, sir. Maud, just speak to Frank.’

‘Nothing would give me greater pleasure,’ said Frank the audacious, assuming an attitude of rapt attention. For Maud, with her fair face aglow with pleasure and the breeze, was likewise a charming spectacle. Her expression, if not so thoughtful as that of her friend, was even more animated.

‘Speak to him! That I never shall demean myself by doing again unless he takes us up Hart-Leap Hill,’ she said.

‘There, sir,’ said Trenna, triumphantly.

‘But my dear girls——’

‘What impudence!’ they exclaimed, both together.

‘Well, “girls” then. You can’t be grown women to propose such a scheme. The hill is a good half-mile long, and if so much as a gig should be coming down it’—with one accord they turned their backs upon him in contemptuous silence, and gazed with affected interest upon the two black specks on the horizon, to which Mark and Kit had been by this time reduced. ‘Well, since you have set your minds upon it,’ he continued, ‘I’ll chance it.’

‘The golden opportunity of obliging two young ladies this gentleman calls “chance,”’ observed Trenna severely. ‘I wonder what he calls good fortune.’

‘I should call it good fortune if we get up Hart-Leap Hill without meeting anything,’ laughed Frank in great good humour. He had never before seen Trenna in so gay a mood; the high spirits of youth are contagious,

and as to Maud, the moorland brook beside them had no ripple more fresh than her laughter, no sparkle more bright than her smile.

Now they dip into the valley and rattle through the quaint old village, with its porched cottages, and its high peaked bridge where the squire's house stands, as it has stood for centuries, and where the vicarage sleeps beneath the shadow of the antique tower; and now they turn short to Westwood and are lost in the depths of Hart-Leap Lane. The ascent is straight, and so precipitous that one wonders it is ever used by wheels; but its steepness does not impress you so much as its profundity—the manner in which the roadway is sunk in the surrounding soil. It resembles a cutting on a railway, or rather, since the sides are perpendicular, a tunnel with the top off;

only, instead of bricks, the walls are bright with wild flowers and greenery, and surmounted by huge trees, whose roots threaten a high-seated driver with the same fate as befell Absolom from the branches. Neither space nor turn in the long vista affords room for so much as a mule to pass them, nor is there a gateway on either side through which the waggonette can be driven to leave the road clear for the descent of any other vehicle. As they breast the hill and get more involved in the depths of the lane, the two girls seem more and more to enjoy the situation; while their guardian Frank (such is often the portion of our sex when the other is at high jinks) was straining eye and ear in the direction of the hilltop, where the appearance of another vehicle would mean illimitable obstruction; they would become like two pellets in a popgun without a

ramrod to push them out. They toil on till they are presently within a hundred yards of the summit. 'Whatever vehicle comes now,' thinks the charioteer, 'the driver will see us and pull up and wait.'

Maud was in the act of expressing a feigned regret that there had been no adventure, when suddenly there fell upon their ears a noise like thunder, and on the top of the hill there flashed clean out against the sky a waggon and horses at full gallop, and without a driver! What had put the animals to flight, there was no time to conjecture; it was not in the power of the frightened creatures to stop themselves, even had they been so minded. The steeds in the waggonette looked up in mild surprise at the approaching portent, and gently shook their heads as though it was a problem beyond them, why horses, not being urged by man, should

come at that pace. But the humans—Frank and the girls—beheld a ghastly charioteer upon the driving seat which *they* could not see. De Quincey has painted for us Death on wheels in his stage-coach adventure, but the peril in the present instance was far greater than that which he portrays, by reason of the extreme narrowness of the road. There was only one way of escape possible.

‘Jump! jump!’ cried Trenna, and suiting the action to the word, she sprang from the seat of the waggonette at a branch above her, swung for a moment seeking for a footing, and then alighted in safety on the top of the bank. She had the litheness of an athlete, and not a little of his strength; a keen eye and a steady hand. But with Maud it was very different. The roar and rumble of the approaching vehicle, hardly visible in the whirlwind of

dust created by its rapid progress ; the clatter of the galloping cart-horses ; above all, the extreme imminence of the peril—for the waggon was now within a few yards of them, though their own horses had stopped—had paralysed her physical powers. She had climbed mechanically upon the seat at Trenna's cry, but there she stood, dumb and still as a statue, staring at the approaching doom with terrified eyes.

‘Jump ! jump !’ reiterated Trenna, in an agony ; but the poor girl was panic-stricken and powerless to move a limb. It is the fashion, especially among those who despise the healing art, to talk of Nature as the Restorer ; ‘leave all to Nature,’ ‘let Nature have her way,’ &c., &c., as though Nature had never the fancy to kill and not to save ; nay, there are times (when she is ‘put out’) when Nature is as a

ravening she-wolf, and would rend the gentlest, limb from limb.

Since Fate would not spare her, and Maud could not help herself, it seemed that no human power could help her, for though Frank was strong, even for a Cornishman (who are for strength the Anaks of our isle), he was not a giant; nor was Maud one of those fairy-like maidens with whom a man can lightly leap across a brook, and hardly know that he is carrying weight with him. She was a young woman of 'magnificent proportions,' and five feet nine in her stockings. And yet we may be sure that Mr. Frank Meade had no more idea of leaving her to Nature's kind intentions than an experimental physician. To step from the driving-seat on to the waggonette and throw his left arm round Maud's waist was the work of an instant; then hugging her to his breast,

well filled with a fresh store of breath, he leapt not at the branch, but at the bank itself. It was the feat of a Titan, but he accomplished it; and not only that, but, though he fell, of course, he contrived the fall with such adroitness that he took the ground first, so that she never touched it, nor felt an ounce of him above her. As they fell together there was a crash and roar beneath them, that told of the catastrophe they had escaped by a hair's breadth.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## AN APPEAL.

IN a very few minutes there arrived help from the farm upon the hill, whence the runaway waggon had started; the poor horses, grievously wounded by the encounter, were led away, but both vehicles, shattered by the shock—which had, indeed, reduced the waggonette almost to matchwood—were left where they were. Frank and the girls had perforce to continue their journey on foot, which they did in unwonted silence. In the presence of Trenna, Maud could hardly express the gratitude she owed to her preserver; but her tone and man-

ner made it sufficiently manifest. She had always liked Frank, but, as she had hitherto imagined, more for her brother's sake than for his own. She had been no whit afraid of him, as she was of Kit, but had admired him less. The coolness, however, he had shown in the recent catastrophe, his gallantry, and not least, perhaps, the extraordinary strength and agility he had exhibited, filled her with quite new ideas of him. In her eyes he had suddenly become a hero. She had never been surprised at Mark's attachment to him, but she now wondered for the first time why Kit was preferred so much before him.

Was it because Trenna made a shrewd guess at what was passing through her friend's mind, and resented it upon her brother's account, or was it for some other reason, that she felt displeased? She had no right to be jealous ;

indeed, if she had shown the same inability to save herself as Maud had done, Frank would doubtless have made the same exertions on her behalf; but jealousy does not go 'by rights.' She had certainly felt a pang—not of envy exactly, but of regret, or grudge—when she saw her friend in Frank Meade's arms. And after that agreeable experience, I think Frank himself regarded Maud with somewhat different feelings. At all events he felt an attraction to her such as all kindly natures do feel towards those to whom they have done a service. And at this Trenna made no guess, because she was certain of it, and the conviction afforded her anything but pleasure.

When Maud had been seen safely home, it was found that Mrs. Medway had thought an evening drive might do her good, and had gone out with the ponies; and instead of waiting for

the return of the carriage Trenna persisted on pursuing her way home on foot, and of course Frank accompanied her. It was the first time they had been alone together since they had rowed up the river in search of the missing boat; and much had happened in the meantime. At first they talked of their late adventure, to which topic—though he was far from egotistic—the young man would have been well content to stick, for he had a presentiment that Trenna might introduce the subject of Abel Deeds, from which they had hitherto abstained by tacit consent. Nor did his suspicions prove groundless.

‘I want to say a few words to you,’ said Trenna, suddenly, and with great earnestness, ‘about this business at the Assizes.’

‘We had much better leave that matter to settle itself, Trenna,’ was the other’s quiet reply.

‘Your father has taken his own way, for which you are in no wise responsible; let the Law decide it. I cannot argue with you upon the rights and wrongs of the question, for very obvious reasons.’

‘I don’t want to argue upon them, Frank I am well persuaded that you are in the right and that papa is in the wrong. It is not that at all; what I am about to ask of you is a personal favour.’

‘My dear Trenna,’ he said gently, but with great gravity, ‘whatever you wish me to do, as regards myself or you, you may look upon as done; I think, indeed, I should have the foresight to understand your wishes, even if unexpressed, as I most certainly should have the desire to fulfil them. But this business of Abel Deeds is not my affair at all; it is a matter of simple justice. The man, in my

father's opinion, has been grievously wronged, and he is bound, for our old Rachel's sake, to see him righted. Mr. Garston denies that he has been wronged—intends, indeed, if possible, to wrong him still further. It is clearly our duty, if the lad is innocent, to defend him; if otherwise, the Law will punish him, and your father will be justified.'

'But you do not only defend Abel, you attack my father.'

'Pray don't say "you," Trenna; do not mix me up personally, and without necessity, in this unhappy matter. That I sympathise with Abel is most true, but you *must* know—you cannot help knowing—what regret and pain it gives me to be obliged to take action in such a matter, and thereby to place myself in apparent antagonism with one so dear and near to you.'

‘Apparent?’ she echoed bitterly. ‘You call an action for libel an apparent antagonism?’

‘We had no choice but to bring it, Trenna. If you compel me to speak plainly, Mr. Garston’s obstinacy has forced that course upon us. I am afraid it will be necessary to place both Mrs. Medway and Mark in the witness-box. Can you imagine that anything so painful and embarrassing was of our seeking?’

‘I know, Frank, my father is in the wrong,’ returned Trenna, softly; ‘I acknowledge that if the case is to rest on its merits it must needs be given against him. I am pleading with you for myself.’

‘Yourself? Nay, Trenna, I cannot allow you to put the thing that way. What we have all striven to do from the very first is to eliminate

you and Kit from the whole business ; there is not one of us but understands that you have nothing whatever to do with it, but are as much the victims of circumstances as Abel himself.'

'Put yourself in my place, Frank,' she answered quickly. 'Suppose my father were your father.'

Here Trenna, notwithstanding her sagacity, made a mistake. We can go a great way with our friends—with a very dear friend often farther than we ought to go ; but when they make demands upon our sympathy for *their* friends (especially if we don't like them) our ardour cools. The very phrase 'suppose my father were your father' was objectionable to Frank ; he could not picture, even for the sake of argument, the grim proprietor of the Grey House standing to him in the relation of a

parent in place of the kindly Doctor, with his scorn of baseness and of greed.

‘If I thought my own father in the wrong,’ he answered, though with a keen sense of the insufficiency of the reply, ‘I should not side with him.’

‘Nor do I side with *my* father,’ answered Trenna, quickly; ‘but yet I have some sense of proportion. Let Abel be righted by all means, but not in this Quixotic manner. It is surely not worth while to carry fire and sword into a friend’s house to right a stable-boy. Let him be exculpated, let him be compensated, by all means—if you will give us time, Kit and I will do that; but do not for his sake persecute us who have done him on wrong. Our home was not so happy a one before, Frank, that it needed such a Nemesis as you have brought upon it, I do assure you.’

‘Oh Trenna, Trenna,’ pleaded the young man, deeply moved, for he knew that what she hinted at was likely enough to be the case, or in other words that Mr. Garston, despoiled of his property, and disappointed in his scheme of vengeance, must be a terrible house companion; ‘every word you say pains me to the core. But what would you have me do?’

‘I would have you drop this action against my father. I ask it not for his sake, but for my own. We have known each other for years, Frank. It is the first favour I have ever asked of you. You will not refuse me.’

She placed her arm within his own and, gently pressing it, looked up at him with pleading eyes in which the tears were visible. The strong man trembled at her touch, and melted at her tone.

‘I would give all I have to serve you, dear Trenna,’ he answered earnestly, ‘but——’

‘Ay, “but,”’ she answered bitterly. ‘There would be no “buts” if Maud were in my place.’

It was a bold stroke, and one which would never have entered her mind to use but for what had happened that day; and indeed, save for that, her words would have beaten the air. As it was, Frank’s cheek turned scarlet.

‘There is no woman living whom I would more gladly please than you, Trenna; I had hoped you had known that.’

His voice was so tender, his tone so earnest, that it was impossible to doubt the genuineness of his speech. Trenna herself was far from doubting it; though at the moment she would have given much to have been less credulous.

She had drawn a bow somewhat at a venture, and the arrow, in one sense, had gone home; but in another it had overshot its mark. Her aim had been to attain a certain object, but by no means to draw forth an avowal of affection. The effect upon her was very curious. She turned pale and trembled, and, gently withdrawing her arm from that of her companion, walked on in silence. Little did the young man guess what thoughts were occupying Trenna Garston's mind. She was definitely choosing for herself one of two roads in life, or rather between that path that one must tread alone, or that wider way which admits of two abreast. She had never seen a man except Frank Meade of whom she had admitted to herself, 'I could be his wife,' and yet she had never seriously pictured herself in that relation to him. She might or might not have done so under certain

circumstances, but matters had been precipitated. She was like one who having been on his guard for years against a particular temptation suddenly finds himself face to face with it. For the moment she forgot the object of her walk (for she had seized the opportunity of being alone with her present companion with a certain well-defined purpose), and allowed herself a day-dream. Then with a deep sigh, which betokened that she had come to herself, and certain stern realities, she answered calmly:—

‘You are very good to me, Frank, and always have been. Whatever happens I shall always feel that.’

‘Good to you! On the contrary, you have been good to *me*. For in your view, as regards all show of kindness, I am well aware there has been an obstacle.’

He referred to her brother, whose jealousy of him in respect to Trenna had not escaped his notice. A pained smile flitted across her face, in sign that she understood him.

‘But, nevertheless,’ he continued, ‘and as you say, whatever happens, nothing will alter my affection and respect for you, Trenna.’

She hung her head with a little piteous moan that went to the young man’s heart.

‘Good Heavens, Trenna! Can you conceive it possible,’ he cried, ‘that anything that has occurred lately—I mean concerning this miserable robbery—can affect *you*? Whatever decision may be arrived at next week at the Assizes will, at the worst, only prove your father or mine in the wrong. I can understand that matters are very unpleasant for you at home. Heaven knows that I would mend them if I could.’

‘You can withdraw from the prosecution.’

For the moment it here struck Frank Meade that she looked, or rather spoke, like her father’s child. The same short swift retort; the seizure on the salient point; and the practical object pressed with more opportuneness than delicacy, brought the keen attorney to his mind in spite of himself.

‘Surely not with honour, Trenna,’ he answered gently, ‘nor even with justice?’

‘You talk like a book, Frank, and not like a man. Everything in this world, whatever it may be in the next, is a matter of comparison, nor is it the question, How much good shall we do by this or that course of action? but, How little evil? Is it wise to benefit one fellow-creature if by so doing we entail unhappiness on half a dozen others, or ruin on one other?’

‘My dear Trenna,’ he answered, smiling, ‘you are pleading against yourself. It is only poor Abel who in this case is threatened with ruin. On your side—that is, Mr. Garston’s—the worst that can happen is defeat and annoyance. If your father will apologise and offer some compensation, perhaps even at this eleventh hour this unpleasant matter can be arranged. Come—here we are at your journey’s end—let us have to-morrow some message of peace from the Grey House; and I will do my best—my very best—to carry out your wishes.’

They were standing on the hilltop above Mogadion. Immediately below them was her father’s house; they could see the attorney walking on his lawn with head depressed and his hands behind him.

‘And that’s all you can do for me?’

‘Do not say that, Trenna; for there is nothing I would not do for you.’

She sighed and held out her hand. ‘I will not trouble you to go any farther—nay, I had rather not. Here our ways part.’

She only spoke the literal truth, for the road at this point forked; but her tone seemed to give her words a deeper meaning.

‘You are not angry with me, Trenna?’

‘No; I am not angry. Good-bye.’

The tone in which she spoke was again significant, and seemed to breathe a longer farewell than her words implied. And so they parted: Frank to walk slowly to the Dovecote, turning over in his mind what he should say to his father to induce him to meet the attorney half-way; for the Doctor was very bitter against him. ‘Since the man wants law he shall have it,’ he had said, with an expletive

such as he rarely used; but which, when he did use it, meant something. It seemed to Frank that, unless overtures should first be made from the enemy's camp, there was no hope of peace.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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